The Tower

2005

University of Montevallo

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This is how it always is
When I finish a poem.

A great silence overcomes me,
And I wonder why I ever thought
to use language.

"A Thirsty Fish"
Jelalludin Rumi

The Absolute works with nothing.
The workshop, the materials
are what does not exist.

Try and be a sheet of paper with nothing on it.
Be a spot of ground where nothing is growing,
where something might be planted,
a seed, possibly, from the Absolute.

"The Fragile Vial"
Jelalludin Rumi

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Hands
Carol Vance

Meredith Hubbard

THERE ARE NO CHIDREN

When we are so fed
We eat beetles for entertainment
And so rich
We trade dignity for yet more dollars
When we are so civilized
We live on undeveloped T.V. islands
And so educated
We turn a quick deaf ear to knowledge
When the people in need
Need lipstick and liposuction
When all the girls have gone wild
And the boys couldn't be happier
When our faces cover milk cartons
And we cover our faces
When nobody notices
There are no children
And the crying in the distance is neverminded
When peace is no more than a salutation
And we are so terribly bored
We busy our hands with violence
And our brains with excuses
And our hearts with nothing
When we are so done
So anaesthetized and numb

Brittany Kaye Miller

LIMELIGHT

Drama queen dancing on the stage
While the bitching girl stands in the corner
She always wanted her title
But never had the grace

PT Paul

DREAMS OF REVELATIONS

When I was a child, hurricanes came in boxes;
small, black, plastic boxes
with shiny, round eyes
and teeth
that wouldn't pick up any stations,
but grinned like a Cheshire Cat
all the while
that Daddy fiddled with the dials—

even hissssssssing its refusal
to spit out
locations,
coordinances,
latitudes—

an attitude allowed
from small, black, plastic boxes—
while short, white lumpy
candles
stood at the ready,
their wicks practically lusting
for the tongues
of sharply-struck kitchen matches—
all the night sullen,
"swole-up" with desire for rain,
damn the cost
in children lost
on their knees
or on their backs.

The ticking of the wind-up clock
soaked the ticking of our beds.
Dreams of Revelations
festered in our heads.
And I refused
to pray.

Amy Brock

THE DRUMMER AT INNOCENCE LAKE

That lake is where I found my soul. Though some said if you stared into it for too long the lake would steal it. I think this is probably why I kept going there day after day. It was really more of a swamp, but because I was so small at the time it seemed as vast as an endless ocean. The mystery of that lake still haunts me to this day. On my visit last summer I found my spirit hiding in the deep just under the moss, and I couldn't help the twinge of fear I felt.

When I was a child I was sent to stay with the Wilsons, a trusted family, to care for me when my own parents couldn't. They had three children who were all kind of freakish in their own ways. The oldest boy, John, acted way too much like a girl. And the girl, Janie, spent way too much time with Mr. Wilson. I was fascinated with the baby, but Mrs. Wilson wouldn't let me go near him. I spent much of my time there alone, just their dog and me. His name was Luke, and I loved him. Luke was a beautiful golden retriever. He was the only friend I've ever had that knew how to keep secrets. The days that I spent with him are impressed on my memory forever. Nearly everyday we walked down to the green lake together.

I told Luke my secrets there. I was different. I had just found out. I wasn't going to let anyone else in on it just yet. I thought I might not let anyone in on it ever. I would eventually, but people didn't understand and called me a liar. Now I'm on several medications to correct my imbalanced brain. But at this tender age I was more concerned with Mr. Wilson. Mr. Wilson told me secrets. He said I was to never tell a soul what we did while Mrs. Wilson was gone to the grocery store. I never understood what was happening, and I honestly don't remember that much about it. I can only remember so much. The memories are all so scattered. I thought he was my friend. He bought me toys and soda pop. I once thought it was love. I was wrong. Even when Janie and John came forward and said they had been raped by their father, I wouldn't say anything had happened to me. In my mind nothing had. I was just different.

Jimmy Thrasher and Bailey Brannon were out at the lake that day. They were the neighbors of the Wilsons. I didn't like either of them. I didn't hate them. Jesus had said that hating was wrong. If I were to hate them it would be the same as to kill them. I didn't like them, but I didn't want to kill them.

This day that had started so beautiful was going to be one of those memories you hope to forget. The kind that you think about just before sleep hits you, and you're alone in your bed, just you and the dark. The darkness can be so loud sometimes. This memory is a loud one. It's all you think about and then it's all that you dream about. Those are the worst kind of memories.

Jimmy had just placed a worm on the hook of his fishing pole. He was twelve. Twelve was much older than me. It was almost the same as being an adult. He and Bailey were always together. They were all each other had. Jimmy had been left out in the bushes as a baby to die. A good nun from a local convent had seen him there and taken him in. This was all much like the story of Moses to me, but Jimmy was not the hero Moses was. Time went on, and I don't know what happened to the good nun. The old hag probably died. This was where Jimmy was now though, and that was all I knew.

Bailey had a different story, but it was just as interesting. Sometimes Bailey got to see his dad, but he never wanted to. I hid in their tree house one time and spied on a visit. Bailey didn't even acknowledge his father's presence. He had told me once that he had had a happy life up until his mother died. Mrs. Wilson said they should have taken him away from those wretched people long before, but this was none of her business. Bailey had never actually lived in a house until he moved in with the Spences. Bailey's family had lived in a red 1969 Volkswagen Microbus when they were together. Bailey said it wasn't so bad. But his mother was an addict and one day Bailey went to get in the van, and she was asleep. Her face was a pasty lavender, and her limbs were limp at her side. No matter how much he screamed she wouldn't wake up. I once asked him if it was hard to find his mother dead like that. He said it wasn't so bad.

So there we were at the lake, three kids who didn't quite fit. Jimmy and Bailey were both the foster children of Dave and Diane Spence. I was just the kid that the Wilsons got paid to look after. Even though I knew my life to be better than Jimmy and Bailey's, I somehow felt that we were in the same assembly of those who had no voice, or perhaps we were merely overlooked. We were children with forced independence. We felt stronger than most children we knew, but we were still vulnerable and naked to the world in our innocence.

Jimmy and Bailey said I was different from the other girls they knew. I was almost as good as a boy. I had short thick brown hair that resembled a mushroom and wore the hand-me-downs of John, a blue tee shirt and puke-green Boy Scout shorts that were too big and hit my lower shins when I walked. Jimmy was fishing, and I just stared into the mysterious water. Jim was the fisherman of the two. They never kept any of the fish they caught. Jimmy threw his back. Bailey took a butter knife and chopped them up for no reason at all. Jimmy put his pole down to take a leak. Right as he started to piss a fish snatched the line. Jimmy's pole was soon floating out near the middle of the lake.

"Ah Fran! You didn't watch the bobber!" Jimmy was shouting at me as he scurried to the pond pulling the strap of his overall up. He yelled for a while and said some very bad words that I will choose not to repeat.

"What are we going to do?!" He was still shouting.

"I don't know. I didn't mean to. I'm sorry." I was afraid of Jimmy by this point. He began to run up the pathway.

"Where are you goin'?!" I yelled after him.

"To get Dave! He'll be mad as hell, but how else are we gonna' get his pole out the water?!"

I began to run after him, I'm not sure why, but I thought that I should follow. Luke ran after me. With my short fat legs I soon fell behind. I missed most of the action because by the time that I got to the house, I just saw Jimmy walking slowly back towards the path. He had a broom in his hand.

"I got it to try and reach the pole from the dock."

This made perfect sense in my mind and together we walked back to the lake.

"I didn't tell Mr. Spence." He said suddenly.

"Why not?" I knew why not. Any idiot knew why not. He didn't tell

him because he didn't want to get in trouble. This theory went along with his reply.

"Can I tell you something?"

"Of course you can." I thought this was an odd question as Jimmy told me everything anyway. I never told anyone but Jesus, and sometimes Luke.

"I heard Mr. Spence on the phone with my social worker the other night. He was complaining about me a whole lot and said that if I screw up one more time I was out."

I was shocked. I didn't think that any human couldn't at least love Jim and Bailey. You have to understand, this is before I knew that 'special' meant 'trouble'. Jimmy and Bailey were trouble, but they were just special to me. We were silent as we continued on to the lake.

"Don't tell Bailey. I don't want him to do anything crazy, ya' know."

I nodded. I wouldn't tell Bailey. I wouldn't want him to do anything crazy. I could see the lake. I could see Bailey carving at a fish that Jimmy had caught much earlier.

"Your pole is farther out now," he said as we walked toward him.

"I see that," said Jimmy. Jimmy walked out to the dock. The very old dock had once been useful. It went out about thirty feet. There was a tree growing through its middle and branches from surrounding trees overlapped its walkway. The very end of the pier went into the water where it had collapsed long ago. It was only above water on one side. Jimmy walked out to the edge that was still above water. He lay down and began to reach out his broom towards the fishing pole. He fought with the length of his arms for about an hour, and Bailey and I silently watched. This is when it happened. Jimmy reached out as far as he could, his body only half resting on the pier. The pier collapsed. Jimmy went under with the pier. Bailey and I ran to see what we could do. Neither of us could swim. Neither of us was brave enough to go out there. Bailey ran back up the pathway to the Spence's house.

"Jimmy!" I screamed. "Just come up out of the water Jimmy!"

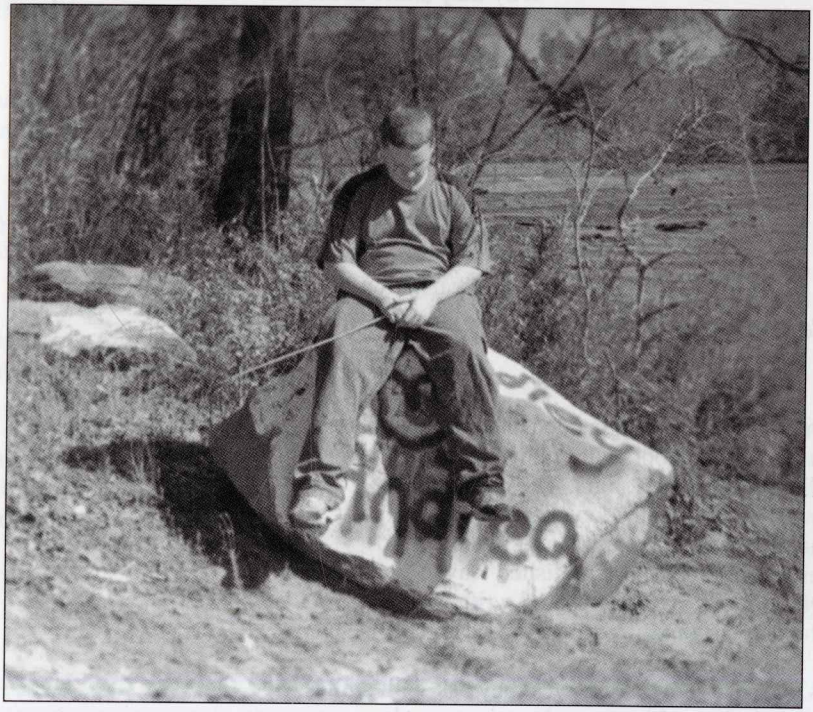
I fell to the ground heaving and crying. Luke went out to the pier and swam around where Jimmy was. I could see the Spence's running down the path. Mr. Spence carefully ran on what was left of the dock to the pier. He went under and what seemed like an eternity later came back up with Jimmy. He had grabbed him around his overalls and was pulling him away from the pier and to the bank just beside it. Jimmy was blue. His dirty blond hair was pasted to his forehead. He only had one shoe on. Mr. Spence began to frantically breathe into his mouth and push hard on his chest, as if his air would catch onto Jimmy's lungs and it would give his life back. Mrs. Spence had run back to the house to call an ambulance. It all seemed so dreamlike to me. I sat staring at Jimmy, then at Bailey.

Then I was alone, yet people surrounded me. The paramedics were there, the Wilsons had come down, and a few other select people that had made their way out to our part of the world to see what was going on. Jimmy's right shoe had gotten lodged between two pieces of the fallen pier. He was gone, and I was alone. I was afraid. The drummer made his entrance into my head and began to play a funeral dirge.

Vivianne Audiss

THE MIND OF A CHILD

The harper's mournful song echoed through the night,
The crystals dimmed with sadness.
The voices cracked with the crystals' shattering cries.
While the sentient land was deprived of its deepest heart,
The galaxy quaked and rumbled with a sadness none knew.
Black-holes were created, white dwarves erupted,
As a galaxy died and the universe shook.
A universe of people who were created by her mind,
The mind of a child.



William
Carol Vance

Leigh Anne Crowson

INCESSANT PRATTLE OF A STEREOTYPICAL ADOLESCENT COPING WITH AN IDENTITY CRISIS

The midnight hour comes upon us
And there is no way to relieve the sight
Of all those who've died in the name
Of a name that has died.
There is no home inside for those
Who have no name by which to die.
I am no martyr for this dying reality
I've no place for my own injured mind
Scarred by the environment
The world of which I was born.
There is no reason behind any of it
Why they smile at the sun
As it burns them slowly away.
There is no relief from the endless search
For solace that is not there.
There is no connection between you
Or the others that thank the one
That slaughters you and there is no
Way of telling how you'll go.
There is no morning to this night
It never ends, it's all true
That's all a lie.

James Ryan White

MAD HOUSE

Our walls should be padded. The rooms dressed
in white. The doors with no handles, and the
blinding florescent light. The doors cold
and steal bolted, the keys thrown away. Fed
our meals by nameless nurses, we learn to
respect the medical established way.
Our choices made for us and written on a
chart. Everything from birth to death seems
it's written here from the start.
Why must you make waves they ask with smiles
on their faces. It's so much easier to make
bets when you know the outcome of these
races. Have we led you astray? Things could
be worse. You could be in debt, instead you
get money from your mother's purse.
These are people I love with all my heart,
that's not a debate. I just wish I were able
to make my own childish mistakes.

Lauren Cleveland

ADOLESCENCE

I look up at the ground
And realize
I'm no longer where I used to be.
I'm fighting happiness,
And I'm realizing I ran away from it
A long time ago.

I look down at the stars
And it is brought to my attention
That most of the times I was burned,
I held the match.

The many times that a cool drop of water
Offered to rest on my parched tongue,
I had turned it away.

I have a dream,
But there is more evidence that it will die
Than fly.

My heart is the enemy to my mind.
More times than not,
I am wrong.

Analysis is my favorite
But the passing clouds blow my predictions
Into the depths of the sea.

It's all out there
Within my grasp,
Yet I chose to remain
Treading in my own tears.

James Ryan White

TIED DOWN

Hell is not the only place filled with the
fire and unquenched desire of man's soul.
Trapped, doomed to never again feel whole.
My flesh burns with the thought of regret,
at the loss of my safety net. I see the
pleading in their eyes. Wishing, praying,
hoping, to God there is no surprise. They
make eye contact with me, I see by the force
of their stare, they hope my legs will
somehow grow roots while I'm standing there.
I know somehow if I don't move now, I'll
never move again. Same friends, same family,
and the same fights. I'm blinded by who I
want to please. I'm banking on a dream on
bended knee. They know who they see, they
know not me.

Lindsey Sherrill

EMPTY

Empty.
At some point I realized it was all empty.
Somewhere in the whiskey, the insomnia, the aching heart, the
loss of myself,
I realized it was empty.
Somewhere between vomit on the floor and
bruises
Somewhere between rumors and failures and
and deceit,
Somewhere between the threats
The bitterness
The tears that don't flow except to bleed blood I realized I don't care
I trade my aching heart for an aching body.

I think it's a fair trade.

Kackie Nivens

MELTING INTO MORE

The car stalls.
Snow falls. I feel a slight pinch,
Which grows and evolves
Into a strong embrace.

As I sit in the cold, I stare, entranced, at a perfectly symmetrical flake floating
Down from the sky and watch it gently connect with the clean, crisp, sheet
Of glowing perfection that covers the ground.

Pressure swells inside my chest and a tear rolls down my cheek.
I suddenly realize that warmth has surrounded me,
Moved in,
And extinguished the fear that has been frozen
Inside.
The fear of being out in the cold,
Tramping through the snow.

My heart ignites.
My flesh burns to life.
All the colors of this world,
Colors I've yet to identify,
Replace the icy, hard grey
That consumes the sky.

I sling open the car door and torpedo through the snow,
Collapsing onto my knees to embrace this life-changing moment that has seeped
its way into my existence, finally.

The still silence shatters
So fast I barely have time to react.
Music danced through the air.
Wild melodies swarm around me,
Clutching onto my soul,
Lifting me up
Like someone grabbing the collar of my shirt,
Pulling me off the ground.
The impact is arresting,
As I scramble to stay within this moment,
As my ravished body ingests the beauty,
That is so overwhelming, so chaotic…

And yet somehow,
I find, here in this place,
The most placid and delightful state I've ever known.

I submit,
I absorb,
Refusing to let go.

Brittany Kaye Miller

AIMLESS

Sitting with thoughts too fast to catch
Trying to explain myself in little words
I can't keep up with all the lies I've used
All the promises that I have created, and broken
Not comfortable caught in this spotlight of shame
Squirming under the bright light haloing my shape
You look for answers that I cannot give you
I ask questions that I have no business knowing
You take my rebuttal, and seem to feel the attacker
I sit and play like the victim when I am the guilty
You want to hate me, but find that my eyes beg forgiveness
I feel as though I should repent, but you are too easy on me
I smile inside, and count down the seconds till you cave
Our gazes break, I arise from my seat of shame turned white
Now I am the pure innocent, and you are the soiled sinner
How easy it seemed to escape the persecution of my crime
The judge and jury too close and full of sympathy to punish
Not accomplishing what was wanted, and not preventing anything
The inspiration shaken, and the mission destroyed in my cause
Thoughtless, reckless behavior rewarded instead of squashed
How I float through it all just as jaded as I was before
Aimless I am, and too smart to be caught in your consideration

Teresa Foster

PARCHED

Innocent, brittle sponge,
Weeping invisible tears
Not one drop are you allowed!
Untaught affection eluded.
In this drought, emaciated,
Quivering with outstretchd desperation.
Squinting, gaping, spying
Scavenging—-
For only a drop will suffice.

Thirsty swollen soul,
Your intentions evident
As outstretched palms cupped.
Only worthy of denial
You shall remain,
Cracked and fragile,
Unnecessary and disposable.

Bo McGuire

A FANCY HOMECOMING

His stomach churned as he made the last steady turn into the clean, crisp, middleclass neighborhood. Vince pushed the car into park and opened the door quickly while surveying his old terrain. He spotted his father's worn van, but where was his mother? Probably away cleaning something for someone. Then he remembered it was Sunday. "Church," he whispered to himself. He opened the back door to grab the bags that couldn't be shipped but turned away at their mountainous sight. "I'll have to have a drink before I deal with that."

"Ah, the treasured son, we've killed the fatted calf," a learned voice said coming out of the tiny office adjacent to the house.

"Yeah, well just make sure there's a good Merlot served with it, if you're going to make me eat a cow."

"It's already been taken care of," his dad dryly said as the two embraced.

"By the way dad…I'm you're *only* son. 'Don't try to get on my good side, I no longer have one.' I'll give you 15 million dollars if you know what movie that's from."

"One of those sappy Lifetime movies you and your mom love so well." His dad reached inside his car and started removing the cargo. "Smells like cigarettes in here."

"Please, dad, whatever…I gave up," he paused. "…Lifetime when they cut Designing Women. It's from *Steel Magnolias* you doof."

"Exactly. One of those sappy Lifetime movies you enjoy so much. And what part of speech is whatever, exactly."

Vince cut his eyes, a method he learned early on from his father. "May I remind you," he protested as he helped his dad with his Judy Garland prints, "that the movie has four Academy Award winners in it and a Grammy winner to top that. And poor Daryl Hannah is in Mandy Moore movies now." They made their way towards the garage. "And no grammar quizzes while I'm at home, Mr. Smart. I had so many lit courses that I thought I had actually begun to understand Emily Dickinson."

"Dickinson, what a freak. Read any Hemingway lately?" His sarcasm was slipping out the corners of his smile.

"Hemingway was a drunk."

"So was I. And if you don't watch it…"

Vince cut off his father as he spotted the homemade welcome sign in his mother's handwriting that read, THAT'S OUR BOY. "Nice sign…who's the boy?" *Did they really need to announce the fag was back in this sort of Donna Reed way?* he thought to himself.

"Very funny…you know your mom wants to make this special for you."

Vince stopped dead in his tracks as his dad swung the door open. It had been so long since he had stepped across that threshold to stay for more than a night or two. The Alabama sun from outside dried the dampness on his face. "Well, not much has changed here," he said brokenly. "Still clean as a

fucking whistle."

"Not a piece of fringe out of place." He watched his son purposefully pull one away from the rug. "You better watch yourself, there's a heavy fine going around for that these days."

"Yeah, I bet you don't get talked to for a week for that."

His father nervously fumbled his bags onto the soft, queen size bed. "Be careful of her Vince, she's missed you." Vince watched the ceiling fan spin round and sat on the bed. "You can hardly move in here now that your old stuff is mixed with the new stuff you sent."

"Yeah, I can't believe mom hasn't stuffed it in a closet or underneath a bed already."

"Only…you know she'd never have touched it if you asked her where it was," his dad said sharply.

"Looks like I'm not the only one who needs lookin' after." Their muffled laughter was interrupted with the slight squeak the back door made as someone opened it.

"Come home boy, your poor old momma's dead," he heard an old, but more fragile voice sing the hymn from the back of the house.

"Her," he mumbled as he released an exasperated breath and fell back on the bed. He caught a glimpse of her burgundy hair as his mother opened his door slowly, peeking through the crack like she did when he was a child. "Is that the kind of morbid song they teach at First Baptist these days Momma?"

"Now, I'm sure there's an insult in there somewhere…I'm just not sure where." Her thick southern dialect hung in the empty air of the room.

"You wouldn't," he cut his eyes and raised up to kiss her Mary Kay blushed cheek. "You've missed me, haven't you?"

"Just what in hell is that supposed to mean Vince, when you know I have?"

"They teach you those words in Sunday school too, Momma? Easy girl, I was just being sarcastic." He played in her hair, ushering her out of the room while she gave him an uneasy look. "Looks like someone's in need of a root job."

She met him with a glare as they stepped into the lengthy hallway. "Well, I'll be damned. Between your daddy and your Nanny giving your Papa hell, just when am I supposed to have time?"

"O.k., maybe just a nerve pill will do."

"Is that what you've been doin' off at college, pills?"

"God no, Momma, it's much more in vogue to snort things now." He saw her rummaging through what he said in her whirling mind. His father helped none by snorting his laughter through his nose.

"In vogue, huh? Like the song…I shoulda known Madonna would have something to do with that. You boys just worship her."

"What boys, Momma?"

"Vince, let it go." His dad pushed, unwilling to travel down that road once more.

"No, I wanna see where she's going with this."

"Don't you talk down to me Vince…Don't start in on me now…" She rummaged through the crisp refrigerator for something to serve for Sunday brunch. "…not after the week I've been having with Ms. Williams who can't decide if Loretta Lynn or Tammy Wynette comes to visit her when everyone else at the clinic leaves. Tell me things about school."

"No, we're going to discuss who these estranged males are first off," his eyes gleamed…he loved to press her buttons, to get her raring. As long as he could remember their relationship was built on fighting for control of his life.

"Well, in that case, I'll come save you when I hear the dishes start crashing," his father called back as he made his way towards his office, his little hiding place. The only room not connected to the main house. Vince paid him no attention and kept his glossy eyes fixated on his mother.

"O.k. out with it, what…" his voice was silenced with a tender sob from his mother's head, still stuck in the refrigerator. "Why are you crying *this* time Momma…Sally Struthers and the homeless kids of the world working on your nerves again?" It was a lame jab at her sensitive heart, and he knew it. "Come on Mom, laugh! Damn, you get so uptight sometimes."

"And you're just like your daddy, everything' a Godda…"she stopped herself. "…a joke. It's always a joke with you two." She looked at him coldly and slammed the carton of eggs she had discovered onto the kitchen counter, breaking some of them. The jovial tone in his face turned into complete astonishment. "Fuck, Mom."

"No," she thought out each word in her mind before relaying them to her son. "I'm not crying because of Sally Struthers or those damn kids."

"Then…what, Mrs. Norman Bates?"

"I'm pissed off Vince…that's why."

"At wha…"

She interrupted her son, knowing his next statement. "Nothin'."

"Ah, hell…I got some xanax out in the glove box, want one?" She looked blankly at him. "Well, I'm gonna need one before too long. But, I refuse to play your classic 'nothing' game with you, Scarlett. You've never been *pissed* at anything a day in your life. You didn't even know that word before you met dad."

She surveyed the eggs and the yolk beginning to stain the counter, moved to retrieve the rag that always hung from the kitchen faucet. "All right, then…at everything."

"Meaning…"

She took a long, cruel pause before she began. "Meaning for starters your attitude. You think you're just some kinda somethin' all flown in from that Yankee college. Don't you forget who made you study and who paid for that education…not to mention the apartment and utilities."

"You didn't want me to work."

"Just shut your mouth, Vince. You haven't said anything about how nice it is to be home, to see me…with you it's always Vince. Sometimes you can be so spoiled. You waltz right in here and make fun of church, the way I

look *and* the way I act." *Who the hell wouldn't,* he wanted to say. "And you and your daddy have this little team against me. Speaking words and languages I don't know. Talking about books nobody reads anymore. I just hate it sometimes. Don't even get me started on your father either. He spends as much time on that E-wave...E-save...E-bake…"She looked at Vince for clues.

"E-bay."

Her words sped, colliding together. "Yeah. That's it. It's cursed. He spends more time with it than he does in this house. And when he's not doing that he's reading some book. And, well, you know the extended family has just gone to hell. Little secrets creeping out of every nook and cranny...I tell ya."

"Did Uncle Matthew come out finally?" She gave him another blank look. "Yaknow, of the closet...he's gay, Momma."

"Nope, one is all this family can stand…."

He turned icy. "Stand? That's really what this is all about, isn't it mother?"

"Yes, Vince, stand. I swear, sometimes I just disgust myself thinking whatever happened to my little boy who loved Reba McEntire and sang 'Fancy' to me at the top of his lungs anywhere we went in the car." He dove for something witty to say, like 'should've know then, mom' but it wouldn't come. The word "stand" kept ringing in his ears, one long continuous echo. And then Vince did something he had not done in a long time. He was unable to hold back his tears from his mother. She had won her first battle in years.

"I'm leaving." It was the only thing he could move his mouth to say.

"You always do." She didn't stall him, only watched him from the window as his tiny car rolled from the driveway and wondered what she had done to make her only son hate her.

Vince rolled through each of the three electric red stop signs onto the main highway. He hated to cry. What a weak ass, he thought, He needed to do something strong. He needed to fuck, drink whiskey, or get high. He reached for his cell phone and searched the directory for Liz. It rang twice and her older sister Marie answered the phone.

"Hello?" Her harsh voice reminded him of uneventful nights of bliss the three shared before he left.

"How's my favorite Homecoming Queen?"

"You asshole, where have you been? Well, wherever it's been I hope you're on your way here now."

"I am indeed." His throat was still frothy from the cry.

"Liz is gonna flip. She's in the shower now…You ok? Sound a little…"

"Yeah, yeah same ole'…I hate my beast of a mother."

"Gotcha, I'll have it rolled by the time you get here, and don't forget we moved to apartment 5, right below the old one."

"Great. Oh, and Marie…"

"Yeah?"

"Don't use words like 'flip.'" He couldn't help but be sarcastic with

her. Old friends brought out old traits.

"Fuck off…Mr. Degree." The phone slammed in his ear and he remembered how great it was to have people in his life who could feel him without even seeing him. He hadn't had that in a long time…he had discovered quickly it was purely a southern trait. Away at school, on nights when he waited below the roaring streets for the next train, he often yearned for those clear nights, driving aimlessly with the people he had known since grade school. There his insides, accustomed to wide spaces and sprawling pines, ached, cramped in between skyscrapers and theatres and bars. His feet longed to be without shoes and his body detested being wrapped up against the chilly winds.

His thoughts unraveled when he pulled his light blue Chevy onto apartment row. He loved it here. So far beneath everything. Trash littered the unpaved drive up to where the apartments sat happily in their fifth. It was a place his mother would despise. She used to let out one of her famous "I really frown upon that" sighs when he would tell her he was going there after school let out. He could hear her now, "I don't even understand why those girls just *had* to move out on their own after that oldest one graduated."

"Because their dad beat them," he would casually reply as he walked out of the house, embracing those cool mornings.

"Well, I still just don't get it," she continued screaming from the house as he piled his books into his car.

He would always scream back, "It's not for you to get." Silence was always her reply.

He pulled the gear shift into park and the dust became calm. He made his way down into the murky stairwell searching for number 5. The smell of rot and standing water had almost overcome him as he found the blackened door and knocked. Liz opened the door and pulled him close for an unusually long time. "Saying I've missed you so much would not even begin it."

"I know," he said.

"You can't ever leave here again."

"Please, don't damn me here for eternity." He made his way towards their couch and fell into it.

"Well, as long as you take me with you." She gave him a wink.

"Then who would keep me in line," Marie remarked, coming out of the kitchen with a joint between her fingers.

"Marie…always the classy one," he reached up and slapped her ass. "Fucked any queers lately?" He remembered the night she had taken advantage of him during his brief stint with oxycontin.

"Don't act like you were moaning for more when you sobered up."

"You know if you weren't so damn beautiful I would have had you locked up for rape." But they would have never believed him, what man in his right mind would ever have turned down one of the Kelly sisters. They were the envy of all the girls at Colton High, with their matching curled sable locks and trim bodies with subtle features. They could pass as twins…if Marie had a bigger brain and Liz had bigger boobs. She lit the rolled marijuana with expert ease and passed it to Vince.

"Here, you get first hit."

"Aren't I the special one?"

"Anyone is special that can put up with your mom for more than five minutes," Liz said. He looked at her disapprovingly. That *was* his mom she was talking about. "Hey, now you're the one who is always bitching about her…what happened this time? It's a record for you two…only about twenty minutes."

"My God, you used to be a momma's boy," Marie added.

"What's that saying? A man who doesn't have mixed feelings about his mother is insane or an orphan?" They both shrugged their shoulders. "…something like that anyway. She thinks I'm above my raising and that I think everyone is below me, that everyone should pay attention to me. When, quite the contrary, she's the one always seeking attention through her rampages. It's like she just couldn't handle me being there…interrupting her life, she couldn't take time out to deal with me being home." The sisters looked at each other. "What?" he giggled, the effects of the pot taking hold of his mind.

"Nothing, just sounds an awful lot like a best friend of mine," Liz managed to get out between hits.

"Don't pull that 'fruit of her womb' shit on me again."

"I can't help it…granted she's a bitch, hardcore. But, damn it Vince, so are you."

"What is she so pissed at though?"

"I've got nothin;' on that one."

"She's not pissed, she's hurt," Marie stated as the smoke leaked through her nostrils. "She spent so much time on you Vince, you're her only. When you were born she dropped everything to be your protector. And I don't mean to be cold, but sometimes you can, well we all can, be very unappreciative of her." Vince rolled his eyes. "Don't get angry…I'm just telling you what I've seen from standing back. Liz doesn't see it because she's so close to you. It's almost like you didn't ask her permission to grow up the way you did. It's hard. You just abandoned everything you two had together."

"Yeah, but…" Vince protested as haziness descended on the room.

"Vince, I don't think she's angry that you're gay, she's angry that you think being gay separates her from your life. You don't include her anymore; you just…overlook her. Like she's the maid."

"Damn, Marie…when did you get so philosophical?" Liz attempted to lighten up the heaviness on Vince's face. Like a crow in the middle of sleep the buzz of Vince's phone snapped everyone's attention towards it.

"Only three hours in town and word is already out," he joked as he answered the phone. "Vince Smart, wanton sex god, very hard man between his thighs, what can I help you with…" They all laughed as he quoted his favorite Renee Zellweger movie. "Yeah…That dramatic bitch…serious huh?…ok, I'm coming," he stammered and slurred his words. "Yeah dad, I'm ok to drive, meet you there."

"Who is it?" Liz tried to stay calm.

"Mama…she's having dad take her to the hospital."

"For what?"

"I dunno, he said she looked serious this time though…like a heart

attack. I better get going."

"Yeah, and hurry. If you don't make it before the rest of the family, they'll never let you live it down." She saw the fear in Vince's eyes. "Don't worry about it…we both know she's hard. A clogged artery is like a pricked finger to a woman like that." Liz's attempts at comfort did little to soothe the gnawing feeling down deep in his torso. He found himself running to his car…his mind surprisingly clear.

"I'll call you later," he yelled from the window and sped down the drive and the dust raced after him, throwing up lost Fritos wrappers and forgotten Miller High Life cans in its torment. He scanned the radio away from NPR; this was not the time for news or intelligent gaming. Vince tried to keep his father's sensible head on his own shoulders. *There is no use in worrying about it until I get there and see her*, tumbled through his head. Liz was right…he could not remember his mother being sick in his life. The scanner reached a local country station and he quickly turned it off.

He wheeled the car in quickly to the hospital and parked underneath a sign that read, "No Parking Under Any Circumstances." *"Under Any Circumstances," does this town just try to piss me off?* he thought, grumbling to himself as he moved towards the sliding doors that stated "EMERGENCY." He looked up at the towering building. *A hospital in North Alabama was about as pointless as a Baptist Church in Times Square. This is the same hospital that tore her bladder open when I was being delivered, what good could they do with her heart?*

Having wasted time enough, he took in a large portion of the sticky, stale air and boldly stepped inside…his cigarette between his index and middle finger. A small, unkempt nurse stopped him in his tracks from behind her counter. "You can't park there, and you definitely can't smoke in a hospital."

"They do it in Europe."

"We'll have you arrested," she answered matching his catty tone.

She might be a challenge, he thought. "Go ahead, I'm in the mood to be," he said as he extinguished the cherry on the counter. He didn't bother to brush off the ashes or the butt he left behind. Feeling very Lauren Bacall-ish he made his way towards wooden doors and met the gaze of his entire family through the glass. They stared. They always stared. He walked in and met then with the same disapproving air. He really wanted to give them a thirty minute lecture of wrong shoe choice and the effects of a bottle job on dry hair, but his father met him and pulled him close.

"Don't cause a scene, but it's serious, and they won't let us see her."

"They might not let *you*, but you can bet I'm making my way back there." He felt his mother's rough roots coming out in a way they had not since he hit puperty.

"Through that black door," his father urged.

He walked in quite calmly and found no one. It was rather serene to be in an emergency room. Just a lot of makeshift rooms made of material hanging from the ceiling. He strolled around, acting like he was supposed to be there and found the one labeled "Smart." He pulled the drape back not preparing himself for the pale, broken, half of a woman he saw lying on a stiff bed

with tubes running out of her like a machine. His eyes became wet and his buzz flew away from him. "Momma?" He was unaware if she was beyond hearing at this point. She turned towards him and searched deep into his eyes.

"They say I'm gonna die," her voice scratchy and muffled.

"Oh, do they?"

"Well, you know how doctors are…always wanting you to think it's better than it really is."

"Spoken like a true smart-ass Annelle," he said, giving his best Olympia Dukakis impression. And they both laughed in spite of their tears.

"'Laughter through tears is my favorite emotion.' Which one said that?"

"Don't try me momma…Dolly Parton."

"If I didn't, who would?" She smirked and closed her eyes. Her chest grew ragged and tired with each breath. Vince felt himself twinge with fear. This scene shouldn't be set for another thirty years. That would leave plenty of time for apologies, for getting reacquainted, for long talks about proper make-up technique, God, Dad's new garden, the gossip of the Woman's Club. How could he do this in the three days, hours, or even minutes he was left with? He watched her mouth open, reaching for more air. "Momma?" he stammered, his voice panicky and withdrawn from his body.

"I'm still here. Damn, Vince. Just not real talkative at this point." Her talk was warm and soothing to him, like when he was a baby, resting in her clutch.

"Well, Momma, I don't mean to be dramatic. But, um, I just think you need to know that…"

"Vince, there has not been a day in your life when you haven't been dramatic. Hell, the first thing you did when we brought you home from the hospital was get bitten by the dog."

"I know, but there are so…"

"Baby, quit trying to rush me out of the world. I ain't goin' right this instant. I mean, give me a couple of days at least."

He looked at her, shocked. "That's awful Momma."

"You're just jealous because you didn't say it first."

"Momma, be serious."

"You want serious? OK, Vince. There are no things that go unsaid between a mother and son. Even psychic Sylvia on Montel says, 'There's just something there'." Vince looked at her blankly. "What you're trying to say son, I already know." She watched Vince's eyes light up and a tear roll down the round cheeks he had inherited from her. "You know, you may have gotten your smartness from your dad, but you got your looks from me."

He laughed. "I know, Miss Clayburn County 19…What was it?"

"Let's not discuss years, but Vince, just remember one thing for me."

"Ok."

"If I do end up going, Wherever to whomever, remember I want lots of flowers at the funeral. People need to know I was loved." She grinned.

"I gotcha covered, Momma, always."

Marco Wright

EYES OF A 21-YEAR-OLD BLACK MALE

We struggled for this so many years, but when I look at my people I just come to tears.

You can't forget that our ancestors fought hard, but we'll never see the top if we don't reach for the stars.

Plus I've seen the bottom of the barrel and trust me it's bad, but I can't blame it all on the father I never had.

Pop wasn't a rolling stone; he just never came home.

I never saw his face in 14 years; he never took the time to show me how to face my fears.

Black man take pride in your seed and just because you buy Pampers doesn't mean you've done a good deed.

One day take your child and hold 'em high in the air, if you ever seen *Roots* you can feel me right there.

And all I'm asking is a little afro-centricity, love for your culture, and God-given ability.

Malcolm, Martin, Ray, and Dizzy…

All those guys' legacy rest within me.

From Medgar Evers to Emmitt Till and everybody who faced those hard times…

Your level of suffering will remain in our minds.

Love your brother and you have love for self, don't be selfish acting like you don't care.

From Civil Rights to midnight of the next Millennium, they'll never stop this BLACK movement continuum.

I love my black people wherever you are; I love my black people we must continue to try hard.

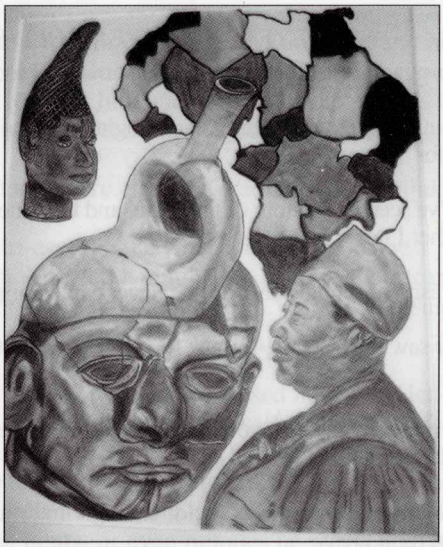
Take me serious, my culture's my love…

But it angers me to see the separation amongst us.

Imagine what we could do with unity, but instead you judge me without truly knowing me.

We're all fighting an uphill battle so why must you battle me too?

Be proactive and **HELP YOUR RACE HELP YOU**!



African Pride
Amanda McGinnis
Medium:
Graphite

A.

I have a scar.

It's white, half an inch long,
Stark on a patch of rosy skin.

It reminds me.
Reminds me of a pain
So exquisite
It blots all others.

It recalls
Blood, so sweet
From the unforgettable pain.

It hasn't faded.
Still there. Puckered,
naked.
Reminding me daily
Of moments I could not forget
Moments I never will.

Showing any who see
Me, open and intimate
What pain did to me.

A scar.
I never want it to fade.

PT Paul

CATECHISTIC RHYME

Lost gospels penned by children
recreate the world in crayon-
waxy scratches crease white sheets
like lightning tearing up the sky.
scrawled forth in artless laughter:
blue,
blue,
BLUE!
until the heavens crash
upon each mountain peak of grass
ascribing vital landscapes
in the journey of imagination;
the assimilation of symbol,
color,
shape
and form
as man is born again as God in effigy-
circle head wed
to truncating limb lines-
man in mime
spelling out the catechistic rhyme:

"I AM"

James Ryan White

HARDEST HEART

Sunset cast shadows over the cross on the hill.
Tears fall as the numbness wears off.
What had they done, and at what great cost? Images flew through the minds of the lost. His words haunt them young and old.
What, oh what had he foretold!

The people who knew him best called him father, friend, and savior
For he was the one in the manger. They had shed their tears, but they didn't seem as sad as most.

Was this man truly inherently good?
Was he the king of kings- the Lord of Lords?
This was a question that left every heart torn.
They seem to bank on promises not yet fufilled.
They seem to have a strength above and beyond reason.
His words rang in men's heads "Do what you must, for God has no seasons."

As blood still spilled off the cross, even the hardest heart felt the loss.

Melanie Stewart

AT TIMES I FEEL ALONE

At times I feel alone
Because it seems no one is around.
So I just sometimes sit and moan
They have their own lives to do whatever they please
Do something with maybe their best friend
Or possibly go and do things with their main squeeze.

At times I feel alone
Because at times I want to be
But, other times that is how I am usually known.

At times I feel alone
So I might go outside and walk
To set my mind and body at ease.
If I see someone then I might stop to talk.
But, no matter what I feel like I could do just about anything I please.

At times I feel alone
Cause I might not have anything to do
So I might just sit in my room.
I feel like sometimes I am miles away
At times or on certain days.

At times I feel alone
So I tell myself it will get better
Cause I know eventually it will.

At times I feel alone
So I talk to God about it when I pray
Cause I know he will listen to me
And help me in every way.
If at times no one is there
I will know no matter what happens
Then God will be here in my heart, body, and soul to care

At times I feel alone
So I might wonder is something wrong with me
Am I different from you?
Or am I different from others you might know and see?

At times I feel alone
Cause I usually might not fit in
Or be part of a certain group
And so far I haven't found that certain man.
But, I do know that hopefully something good will eventually
Happen in the end.

Ashley Earnest

GUIDING LOVE

Father, you are too good
to me.
I am awed at how much
You love me.
I don't deserve it.
I fail You all the time.
Still, You continually wrap
me in Your loving
embrace.
Many times I am fearful,
afraid of the future
and beyond.
But, You are always there,
constantly guiding me
and reassuring me.
I can't imagine life without
You, Lord.
I would be a wreck.

Rachel DiCarlo

STRUGGLING WORDS

Climbing into bed
Feeling the soft pillow on my head
Bring my hands together
Closing my eyes forever
Fingertips touch and clasp
Beginning my prayer at last

Having trouble starting out
Concentrating and struggling about
Frustrating in my head
Tears dwelling up and getting sad
Nothing's coming out clear
And it is very hard to hear

Feeling awful of not succeeding
Having more trouble reading
Doing my best
But trying to do the rest
I just want to go out and play
And not have anything to say.

James Ryan White

QUIET MOMENTS

A pin hits the floor, as I hear no more.
Time stands still as she walks through my door.
She has no idea how she looks in my eyes.
My face hides no truth, and tells no lies.
Words cannot express what I see at the backs of my eyes.

I'm a man of many words- I find they suit me to explain away the insanity as this world turns.
As this moment happens however, my brain shuts down- all but eyes. It shows beauty in its finest form.

There is so much that can be said with just a look- more than any page in any book. The look has to have no sub-text as it lets the other senses rest. My tounge is parted in a muteness
mouth words float around in my head, but my brain refuses to let them out. It knows far better than I that there are no words to explain what I'm seeing and why.

The glipse lasted a few seconds at best, but if asked at that moment how long it lasted- a few days, a year, I wouldn't have fathomed a guess. Will she ever see the words I've written here? I'm not sure to be honest- but she saw the look, I know for sure. And, a quiet moment speaks volumes.

Rachel DiCarlo

BETRAYAL

Word pounding in the brain
Constantly calling my name
Trying to stop the game
Finding the person to blame
Getting credit for the fame
Suffering through the pain
Asking.... Is this lame?
To frame
A person expressing the same?

Crystal Majors

LOVE DOESN'T...

Love doesn't injure
it doesn't leave you
with a black eye
to cover with concealer.
Love doesn't yell
and scream and curse
and leave you feeling
like less than a person.

Love doesn't threaten
to kill you when mad
and then apologize
the very next day.
Love is gentle, kind,
patient, self-sacrificing.
It is unconditional,
God-given, and God-led.

Rachel DiCarlo

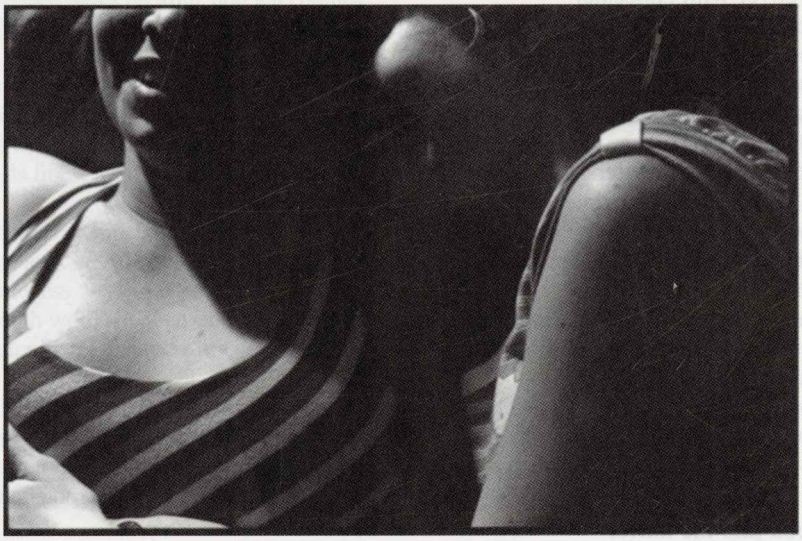
REFLECTION

Look into the mirror
What image do you see?
God gave me the gift
A chance to be free

Staring into the eyes
Feeling the wonderment of the mind
Watching every move
Tracing each line

Hearing the voice
Revealed by the sound
Realizing the acceptance
While others stand around

"A chance to be free,"
What does he mean?
How can I be me
When others judge every scene?



Jennifer and Katie
Carol Vance

Anonymous

GEORGE

George is our child.
A cute soft little toy leopard.
I bought him as a gift for my love
But he told me to hold on to him.

As a promise
Of what comes
later

of a growing
love

of a child
we both
want.

Just not right now.

i am here
he there
3000 miles apart
with 9 years and 2 1/2 degrees between us

we spent
three weeks together
and have been
apart for far too long.

so I will buy a test
and George will still be our child.
Or our child's toy.

Anonymous

ON SAILING WITH NO RAFT

I against one wall,
You the other
An ocean's distance
Dividing a room so small
No meeting of eyes
Or move of lips
To be a raft across

A

KAYLA

Don't fear little one
Don't fear
I promise no more pain, no hurt
No fear
You do not need the lover before
I am the new lover
No fear
Sapphic voice breaking through the wall
Of fear
To take you beyond pleasure to love
And no fear
To go beyond yourself to
The isle of peace you have
Longed for
And no fear
To know what love beyond bounds
Such sweet tangible pleasure can be
Without fear

Anonymous

NAMELESS #1

days which opened
Time sheaves
seasoned my October harvest
while souls
entered faith's silky summer

HAIKU # 1

Tomorrow is come
Already here though I am
So very tired

A HAIKU ON FEARING REJECTION

Trying not to love
Again because I will be
Hurt again

Rachel DiCarlo

LOCKED INSIDE

You're standing calm and still,
Alone by yourself
Wondering who will fill
The emptiness in your heart

You can't take the pain,
That's been inside forever.
Your heart has broken once
And cannot go back together.

You're frustrated with all your thoughts,
And what others think and say.
You're sick of all the fights,
And want to walk the other way.

You're standing calm and still,
Alone in your darkened room
Wondering if you can forget the past
And enjoy the world just as you.

A

VENUS

Sweetness
The sweetness of her young body in a dream
Drives waves of guilt that drown
Sapphic love, so pure in sleep
So forbidden upon waking.
The starburst of passion
Open-mouthed, clinging
Lingers
Like a scent or a
Memory pushed into the past
But never far beyond the surface
Of tainted conscience.
The aura of love upon
The virgin bed
Floats away with sunrise
Yet the taste, the image, the ghost
Fails to flee with daylight.

Anne Atwood

WRONG LANE

Flying down an empty highway,
120 miles per hour
In the wrong lane.

I'm in serious shit
I feel totally lost.*

I have no control;
Over speed
Over gas or brake pedals.

I keep asking myself, wondering how
*I keep closing my eyes, but I can't block her out**

The trees, the grass, the sky
Become one colorful blur before my eyes.

And I'm all mixed up, feeling cornered and rushed
*They say it's all my fault, but I want her so much**

Trying to focus,
Bring out one comforting, familiar image from this blur.
My eyes burn
My head hurts
From all the tears and all the thinking.

I want to fly her away where the sun and the rain
*Come in over my face, wash away all the shame**

I'm swimming in adrenaline
The speed is addictive
The danger is addictive;
The curiosity
Is deadly addictive.

When they stop and stare it doesn't worry me
*Because I'm feeling for her what she's feeling for me**

I don't know what lies at my journey's end
More tears, more pain, more things broken?
Or if I will fly from these feelings,
From my very existence

I can try to pretend. I can try to forget
*But it's driving me mad, going out of my head**

All I can do is hold tight and ride;
There is no control
It feels as though I am waiting
For death, no
For life.
For beginning.

All the things she said
*Running through my head**

**Lyrics taken from the song "All the Things She Said" on T.A.T.U's album "120 km/h in the Wrong Lane."*

Vivianne Audiss

He loves me
He loves me not enough
Too much to hold me
Not enough to let me go
Knowing he loves me grips me tight
Knowing I can't hold him tears me apart
He loves me too much to let me go
But he cannot hold me
He loves her too much
He tears all of us apart
Holding on and letting go
Ripping three lives apart
All over love and pain

Rachel DiCarlo

DREAM

I've been wishing for a dream
That has never come true
And in this dream
I see a reflection of you

With the texture of your face
And your laid back style
Keeps a little special place
With such warmth for a while

You looked into my eyes
In hopes of this forever
Remembering all of the times
That we shared together

You slowly disappeared
Into the light shining through
And you simply whispered the words,
"I Love You!"

Lindsey Sherrill

NEWNESS

something so familiar
yet new every time.
a scent, a taste, a touch
that drives me insane and
makes me crave the thing I fear the most.
my friend, my foe.
my demon, my god.
driving to personal hells,
saving me from myself.
show me again what heaven is,
by your roughened fingers and mouth
drag me to the darkest depths I crave.
show me the birth of a flower
in the dead of winter,
the death of a songbird
at daybreak.
let me love the sun
and embrace the night
let me kiss where I have never seen,
touch what I have never felt,
find what I have never lost.
let me love what I have hated
and open to what I have closed off
for so long.
let me find newness in the old,
beauty in the pain.

Vivianne Audiss

HE'S HERE

I feel his arms when they aren't there
I feel his hand and his weight
I remember his taste when I haven't seen him in days
I can feel his bed when lying in my own
I dream of his face, I wake smelling him
He's there when I fall asleep
He's never slept in my bed but I see him there
He's invading my mind, day and night
Weak, seeing, selling, he's invaded my senses
I need to know why
I have to find out

Teresa Foster

THANK YOU

Broken, depleted, lost
I once was.
Peering into lowered eyes,
You saw me as real.
Shining out of this desolate wasteland,
You saw what the mirror did not:
Possibility and promise.
Missed by the many who surrounded me.
For they, too consumed, overlooked my purpose.

Brave, solo searcher,
Your quest, matched by no one, now accomplished,
For out of this rock, a rose has blossomed!
Holding, caressing, coaxing me from the shadows—
Shielding my eyes from the light,
I now hold my head up smiling and feeling the warmth of contentment,
Unimagined and undeserving.
With your arms as forts, known only as barriers and feathers in this world of thorns,
I am safe.
Words are too little to say thank you.
Thank you for searching, loving, and leading.
For without you, I would not have become me.

Lindsey Sherrill

MY DOUBLE EDGED ANODYNE

***an·o·dyne** : adj. Capable of soothing or eliminating pain. n. A drug that allays pain.*

Pleasure
Beyond my mind
Beyond my fingers
Stretching like a flame
Scorching as it quenches my desire.
Intensely aching
feeling the bloody fervor
of healing
As pain subsides
to passionate horror.
Touching deep within me
barely grazing the surface
longingly having everything
And nothing in the shortest eternity
that death lets me live.
Fearing what i cling
Fearing worse the letting go
Clutching in loose hands
The blood that gives me life
And takes away what I live.

A. Suzanne Flynn

MY ADONIS

I watched you sitting across the room
In a garden of weeds you bloom
No other boy is as beautiful as you
Of my affection you never knew

I watched the sun set your golden locks aflame
Blue eyes so deep one could lose one's name
Sunlight kissed your marble, davidian brow
Lips pouty and soft, you are my Tao

Your chest firm, your shoulders broad
Apollo and Eros have nothing to laud
When compared to you, my heart, my love
Over even David you rise above

Your lopsided smile makes my knees go weak
My heart beats only to hear the words you speak
You helped me pick up the papers I dropped
When your godly hand touched mine, all time stopped

You lie on the sand with me, feeling my heat
Your wide open blue eyes hold no deceit
Your marble limbs are still in the moonlight
Your chest bares to the cold caress of night

I lean over; one hand caresses your chilling flesh
Another runs through your golden hair, enmeshed
Your lips, soft, pliant, are captured by mine
Fire burns within me and our limbs entwine

The only sound to be heard is our bodies meeting
And the pounding of my heart's rapid beating
I grind against you, rub your face, your hair, your chest
Smearing the redness across your breast

The spell broken I pull away, your lips are cold
Your brilliant hair no longer quite so gold
Blood runs from your neck down your shoulder, your arm, your hand
Forming and joining crimson puddles in shifting sand

I stand and lick that hand that has turned so red
Then plant one last kiss on your marble forehead
It shouldn't have happened like this
You shouldn't have said no to my kiss

We were destined to be, you and I
You refused to see that, I don't know why
My Adonis, your human shell is not hollow
Joining My David, My Eros, and My Apollo

Brittany Kaye Miller

I HATE EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU

I hate you for reasons you don't understand
So superficial you are
But you are honest about your flaw
That annoys me most of all
Our minds you admire
The spirit we both possess
The way we both enjoy
Yet we both hate you more or less
Yet your eyes hold you back
You don't know how to see
I feel sorry for your ignorance
But your ignorance of my hatred is scary
I'll take your time and your money too
My feelings I'll hide and you I'll use
Why you will ask when you finally see
And I will answer to you honestly

A.

THE CRIMSON WATER OF LIFE

Teeth sinking in
Sensuously slow
As I lust for more
Of your skin, taste life.
Feeling the warm heaven
Licking the slow passion
As I begin to drink
The poison.
Red
Like sunsets, poppies, satin, and
Sin
Making me thirst for all your love
The crimson water of life
In rhythm with my heart
Your pain awash in passion
My passion awash in glory
Forbidden fruit
The sweetest wine
Warmed as if by the sun
Will I never get enough?
Addicted, craving pleasure
Knowing I'll never have you all
Praying your strength
Is soaking my tongue
Filling my mouth
With salty pleasure
Longing, longing
For all your heat
As you take mine
And our lusts become
One.

Brittany Kaye Miller

A LESSER SHADE OF RED

A lesser shade of Red
A drop of blood on the tile
She shakes with fear
Tremors and convulsions
She's on the floor
Her hair is a mess
Foam drips from her mouth
But her beauty is apparent
Through the sad state she's in
Falling on the floor
The needle still in place
A lesser shade of Red
His body is hollow
Eaten from the inside
With baggage of blue under his eyes
Turning tricks for a fix
His body is cold
A hand on his head
Trapped in an act of submission
Draining his will and shaking his soul
Degradation and disappointment in his life
Churning inside with an invisible vice
A lesser shade of Red
Addicted to pain
Beaten with fury
She crawls around on the floor
His hand still steady from the fight
Her life trapped in his grip
As they embrace each other
Both in denial of strife
Lying in a haze of deceit
Bringing each other to the grave
Two souls lost together
A lesser shade of Red

Lindsey Sherrill

PSYCHE AND EROS

Psyche and Eros fought,
Their unlike bodies tensed,
As lovers before the apex,
Yet no climax of passion
Could they reach
Nor joy conquer
As one faced the other
In total disparate light.
The one lithe, intangible, her body but plasma,
Yet the very substance of being.
The other virile, potent,
Burning, lusting, foaming
With all that is life
In corporeal scheme,
Yet as transient as the
Black hairs of a head that
So soon turn to grey.
Thus fitted they tangled,
The truth of one against the
Strength of the other.
Psyche cried out, her moan
Near drowned in the
Panting, choking of Eros'
Starving throat.
The wrestle went on, on,
Like Jacob with his Angel,
Like death that will not come,
Like blood flowing from a
Wound by gravity's pull
Long after the heart has stilled.
Psyche spoke, her voice a calm
In the fever tinged haze of the moment.
Her words were of wisdom,
Immortal and balanced
As Anubis with his scale,
Weighing truth for Osiris
And life for the dead,
"Why struggle we here, my love,
Why war? All that is right,
True, made of logic, tested,
Known, balanced, and seen
Declares what must be.
Death will always come, and
With it takes the flesh,
Yet the soul will never be vanquished though cast

Lindsey Sherrill

To Hades or raised to the sun."
Eros hears, yet loosens not
His hold in Psyche's fair locks
As he answers the query.
"Yes, life passes, the
Corporeal form but bread for worms,
Meat for mold,
Decaying.
'Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.'
Yes, 'tis true. But is it
Also not written, 'Eat, drink,
Be merry, for tomorrow we die?'
If dying comes with daylight,
Why not then the night be filled with
Passion, with blood, with
All that means everything
And tomorrow passes lost?"
Yet Psyche cannot yield.
Eros' grip is firm and strong,
Welded with all fleshly
Strength hitherto bestowed;
Psyche's blessed with
Eternity's resonance.
Together longer they writhe,
Neither overtaking or reaching
The conclusion of the fray.
Yet in the stillness of Time's
Everspeeding tilt, Psyche's grip
On all her truth seems dulled.
"What for do I struggle
And so surely in vain cry?"
Her lips ask against the voice
Of all she wills.
Triumph beams in Eros,
Yet for Psyche's sake
He tries to allay the sensation
Of defeated means
Welling in Psyche's breast.
Yet his two-edged comfort is unneeded.
The maiden goddess form
Joins his in a bittersweet
Osculation that is but
Death manifest in
Colors of Life
As the spirit barters itself
For the overpowering needs of flesh.

Anne Atwood

Please, my dear,
Allow me to pick them up…
The pieces of your lovely, broken heart
That I've Shattered on the floor

Please,
Let me attempt to mend it,
To place each fragile piece back together again,
And to put in some of mine

Oh Please,
Allow me to kiss away those tears…
The tears I've caused you to cry.
I promise I will take them all away;
I will wipe them off your neck…the floor

Please, Love,
Let me hold you a while longer,
Absorb the pain I've caused you into my skin,
Breathe it into my lungs,
Let me take it all away

Oh God, Please,
I pray she forgets.
I pray that she forgives.
I pray that she is happy.

Allow me to make it up to her,
To tear out my heart and clean it up,
Make it new again,
And place it deep within her as a token of my love
As a replacement for hers that I've shattered.

Please, Oh Please,
Let me help it all go away.
Let me chase it all away.
Perhaps I can start again?
Let me show you how great my love for you goes.
Let me hold you until there is no longer a close.

A.

THE FEVER THAT WRAPPED ME IN ITS DAZE

(This is a series written between Nov. 4, 2003 and June 7, 2004)

Prologue
March, 2005

I was taken in and wrapped like a spider's prey in silken death-threads. I was drawn like a moth to a flame. My heart melted in his hands...

Now in retrospect I see it all in fragments-a kiss here, a tear there. Too overwhelmed by how things end to remember the sweetness. Too full of bitter gall to care.

1. On the first night

That kiss.

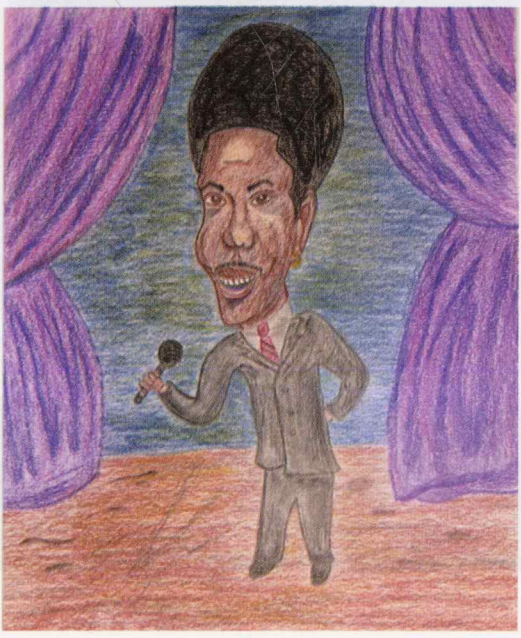
I can taste him. I've never kissed anyone else and really remembered how they tasted. I can taste him. Even though I fight him, hate him much of the time, have been hurt by him, I taste it and it haunts me.

I remember how our legs entwined, our hands moved. I can feel his soft, sweet lips contrasting with his rough, rough hands. I feel myself being pulled onto him while being drowned in a sea of passion. I can feel his teeth when he bit my flesh, gently excruciating as he made me his. I feel his hair in my hands when I tried to pull him closer and take more. I feel his mouth on my neck, driving me wild and growing so intense I thought my heart would burst.

Yes, it was physical. It was sexual, it was lust. It was animal and insane. But it was more. It was sweet, it was deep, it meant something. I just don't know what that something was.

I want more. Even as we grow farther apart and new interest take us both, I want more. I want to feel his hands on my back, his breath on my breast, his body moving with mine, our whispers, our sighs. I want more of the taste I had for so short a time. I want to lie on his chest, holding his hand in mine while his lips spread mine, swallowing his name when I whisper. I want that intimacy and that fire. I want all the urgency, all the pain, all the glory again. I can't be satisfied with what I was given. I have to have more. I ache thinking of it. I ache with the memory of what was and what could be if we continued. I want the physical intimacy, the fever that wraps me in its daze. And I want the scarring, bruising hands to tear me again. The rough, bittersweet kisses that ravaged my breasts, the tender, soft whispers to speak in my ear. I want it all, and I want none of it. I want to move on, but I want this. I need this taste, this assurance that it was real, that my bruises are true. I need to know I didn't dream his taste.

I can taste him. (cont. on page 57)



Top:
Rythmic Land
Amanda McGinnis
Medium:
Color Woodcut Print

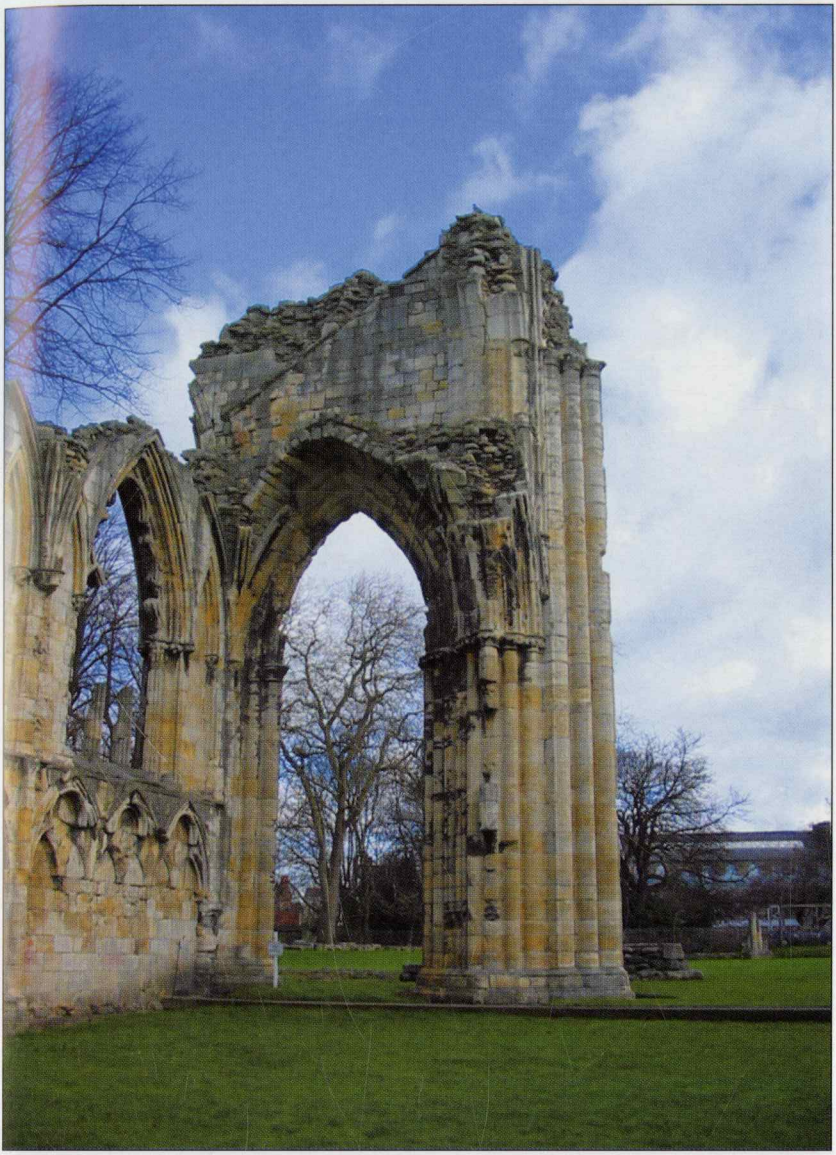
Left:
Bernie Mac
Amanda McGinnis
Medium:
Color Pencils

Alley Cat
Christen Cassady

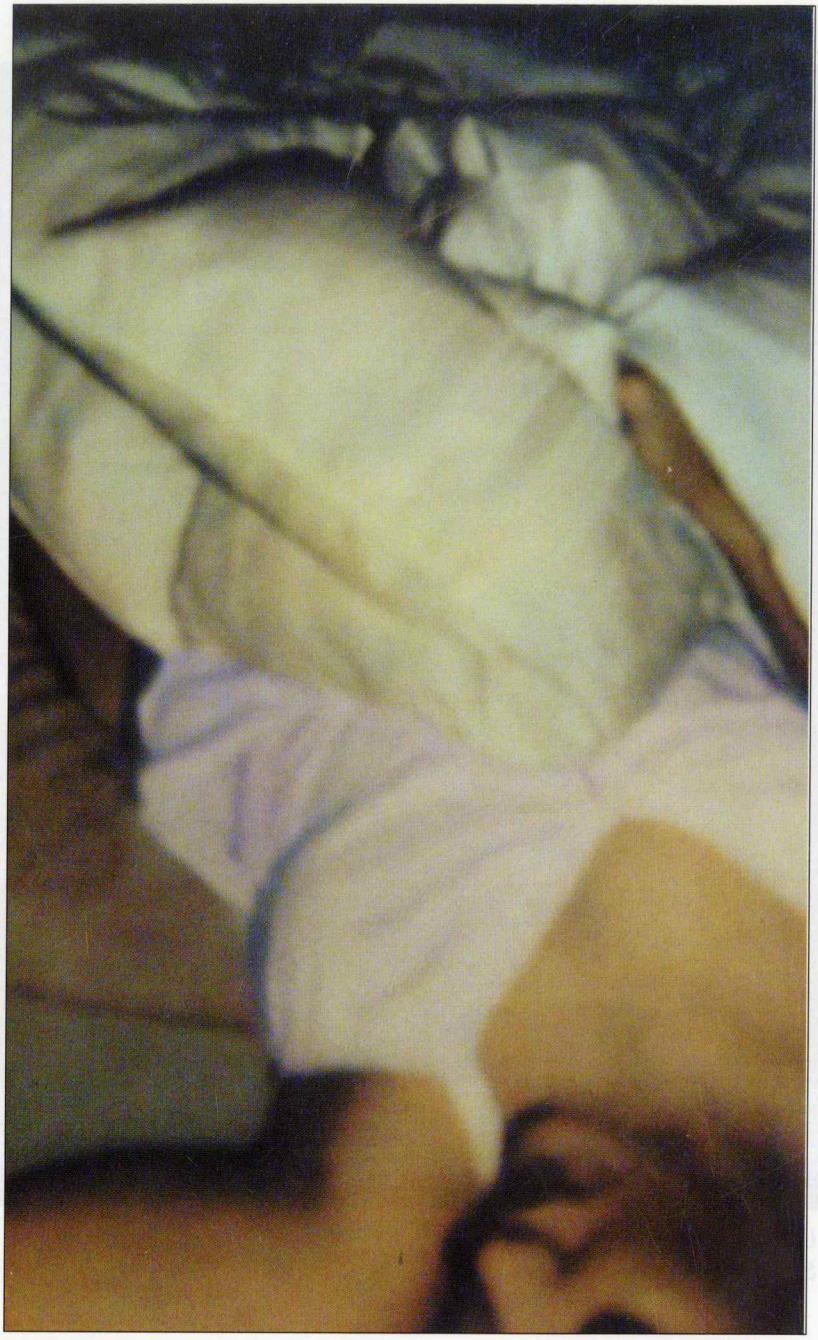
Untitled
Stephen House

Blue
Christen Cassady

Rain
Christen Cassady



Untitled
Stephen House



Hand Pain
Christen Cassady

Water Tower
Chris Sandlin

Back
Christen Cassady

2. Tenderness (after the night together)

It's the tenderness that petrifies me.

If it was all about the sex I wouldn't be so afraid, but the sweetness makes me want to run. When he touches me there's something else there. It's not all physical or sexual or emotional or lustful-it's all of those, and that frightens me. Even when he's rough and leaves me bruised in his passion there's that undercurrent. He never for an instant stops being tender. I don't know how to handle that.

It makes me afraid because it shows he could care which means I could start to care which means I could get hurt again. If all he did was use me or touch me in lust I wouldn't be so afraid. But our encounters mean something. I don't know what they mean yet, but they mean something. That terrifies me. I'm afraid to even think of meaning for fear I'll read it wrong and hurt myself again. Yes, hurt myself. I don't worry he'll hurt me—I worry I'll mislead myself and be broken once again.

Monday night, in his bed, we did it again. We kissed, we touched, we lost all sense of everything as we melted together again. He left marks, but there was still sweet tenderness in his hands. When we were finished he held me. Just held me, not talking, just holding me close to his chest, his breathing in time with mine, his heart against mine, sharing his strength with me. Lying there, as intimately as if we were committed lovers rather than the friends turned accidental lovers we are. Lying there as if we had climbed to the moon and fallen together, saved from the impact only by our closeness. Lying there in each other's arms like we really had a right to be.

And another thing. This continues to happen. This melding, this bonding keeps occurring. We can't seem to get enough and each time it becomes more intimate, even more tender. Yet we haven't really had sex. We've done everything else, made magic with the secrets we create, but it's never gone that far. I don't know why. I want him, know he wants me or this wouldn't keep happening. But how intimate would that be? How tender would that become? Do we really want to be that close?

I wonder. Does this tenderness frighten him too? Is that why it has never gone any farther? Does he fear what it could become? Do either of use really want to be that attached? Is he also afraid of what he feels? Why do we deny this? We can't keep up what we're doing forever. It has to go somewhere—either more intimacy or an end.

Maybe that's it. I think we're both afraid of where this could go. And it's all because of the tenderness. It's too frightening to forge ahead and really bare our souls. But it's far, far worse to risk backing away from the wound we've opened.

It's the tenderness that petrifies me.

A.

3. Not so soon (don't let it end)

I hate it when I go away from him for a few days. I always end up doubting and over-analyzing. I see him and I touch him and I know he has feelings for me. I'm with him, in his arms, and I know it means something. But the second I go away the doubts crowd in. What if I drempt it all? What if he doesn't really care? What if I'm being used? What if he's with someone else when I get back? What if I never get to hold him again?

I know it's silly. Why should less than a week change anything? Why would he hold me in his arms on Monday night, kiss me with so much passion, sleep with his head on my heart, and not want me anymore when I come back? Why should all the intimacy and the wonder be gone so quickly?

It won't. I'll go back, and it will be the same. I'll come home, and he'll be there. When we're alone he'll hold me, kiss me. We might sleep in his bed or make love on the couch, right there, in the middle of the room. He might be rough or tender or sweet. Or perhaps all three. It will be just as good as before, if not better. We might talk, laugh. We might just lay there and listen to each other breathe. We'll tremble. We'll ache for more, and maybe this time we'll try to take it. Maybe.

But the point is nothing will change. He'll be the same, I'll be the same. I shouldn't worry. But I do. I'm so afraid it will all end that I can't be satisfied in the moment. I don't know what else I want. I only know I can't lose this now. Not so soon. I need so much more of him. And it frightens me to even imagine it ending.

4. Bleeding love to live

"I wonder what it's like to get hurt and cry real tears. It's been too long for me to remember. I wonder what tenderness feels like. What is it to be naked and exposed, to drop my cover? What is it like to let go? I wish I knew. I wonder sometimes if maybe I'm saner now than when I'm fully awake. I wonder if maybe what I keep so guarded and hidden under the surface is really me. What if I am nothing like what comes out?"

It's been such a short time since I wrote that. And it's been a lifetime.

Two months. Two short months and I change. So much. For the better, for the worse. Two months and finally, finally I cry again. Finally I can breathe. It hurts. God, how it hurts. But it's good. It's healing. It's what I needed. I've been tender. I've let myself be naked and exposed. I've remembered, or maybe just now discovered, what intensity feels like. I've seen what joy and sadness feel like. I remember the sweet ecstasy and exquisite pain of hot tears rolling like blood unbidden down cool cheeks. I've dropped my cover. I've bared my heart. I've been shamed, hurt, been broken, but it is good. Yes, I can look at the mess I have created and say it is good. I know now. I know what it feels like to be alive. I know again.

A.

I never knew how frozen I was. I never knew how unhappy I was. I never knew how empty, how lonely I was making myself. But now, I'm free. Oh, I'm tied to someone else. I'm not totally independent. But I'm free to feel. I'm free to laugh and cry. Damn my pride, damn my bitterness. Love is worth it. Yes, love. Me, I, this cold hearted cynic, believes in love. I believe love exists. I believe it happens. And yes, maybe I even believe it can happen to me. I ache right now. I burn inside from the painful wrench of my heart being twisted as his plaything. My lips are sore wanting to touch him. But I'm happy on a strange level. I'm happy because love happens. Love happens and it happened to me. Yes, me! In some strange, twisted, lonely way, love touched me, made me bleed, and left me laughing at the blood, proving I'm human, I'm alive, I can feel. Proving that yes, there is life after love. Proving that yes, even hearts of stone soften.

5. Reflection (or six months later)

There is nothing-nothing-nothing! as beautiful as touching the skin of someone you are truly learning to care for and who cares for you. And there is no pain like loosing that. It's sharp, physical, like a knife is actually in your chest. It's heavy, hard, weighing you down so even your breathing is ragged. It's bittersweet, laced with regret, beautiful memories, and the melting remains of what was almost love. It flows slowly, not in great sighs, but in solitary tears that flow silently over the hint of a smile at the memory. It hurts, hurts, hurts like hell, yet you wouldn't give up a second of it. Not one single second because it was all worth it.

I'm filled with so much longing, regret, and shame tonight. I am confused by everything I feel and so lost and helpless as to how to right it.

I miss him. I miss all the golden moments we had before everything turned ugly. I miss the easy, open conversation we once had. I miss the camraderie. I miss seeing his tears and hearing his laugh. I miss being able to call him my friend. And my god, how I miss the nights we spent together. I miss lying next to him, our bodies against each other, arms holding tight. I miss the way our lips met, softy, gently, then growing passionate. I miss the way he'd sigh from pleasure. I miss the way he'd look up or down at me, and I could see how beautiful and desired I was in his eyes. I miss the way he tasted and the smell of his neck when I'd lay my head on his chest. I miss waking in the morning and watching him sleep. I miss the way he'd talk in his sleep, little baby moans, for once being vulnerable and open. I miss the way he'd unconsciously pull me closer to him to wrap his legs around mine as he dreamed. I miss the way he'd try so hard to be nonchalant, to hied it, until the moment we were alone and he had to touch me.

I miss watching movies with him until 4 a.m. I miss teasing him and being teased back. I miss the easy way we danced. I miss the way he would tickle me, knowing full well where it would lead. I miss the way he knew how to make me laugh and how to make me stop and think.

A.

I miss his soft lips. I miss running my fingers through his hair. I miss the way his breath would catch. I miss his beautiful eyes. I miss his strong, strong arms and the hands with the long, perfect fingers. I miss his sexy legs and the feet that would always find mine in the darkness. I miss the expanse and comfort of his chest. I miss resting my head on him and hearing his breathing in time with mine. I miss feeling him on my mouth, in my hands, on my body, his smooth skin filling me with new joy.

I miss the way he taught me to feel again. I miss the way I could relate to everything about him. I miss the way we were so different, yet so alike. I miss the way he made me not only unafraid to care, but made me *want* to care. I miss the way I felt perfectly safe with him.

I miss him so very, very much. The worst part is how tinged with regret it all is. I don't regret loving him for a second. I do regret hurting him, using him, taking him for granted. I regret being so selfish or so afraid that I pushed him away. I regret so very, very much not having made love to him every time I was near him. I regret the other men, the cruel words, the drunken nights. I regret making myself too friendly, too at home. I regret never letting him know how much he meant, and means, to me.

I don't regret caring for him. Because of him I can cry. Because of him I dare think about loving someone. Because of him I learned the difference between sex and making love. Because of him I want to love. I'm ashamed of how I treated him. I'm ashamed of being such a fool. I guess I should see this as a learning experience, but it still tears me up inside. I truly, truly cared about him. Yes, I really believe, as much as I want to touch him again, that it's over. I wish we could be friends again. I miss that the most. I miss being able to call him my friend. I'd do just about anything to be able to hug him right now.

But I can't. All I can hope is that I never make the same mistake like I made with him again. Seven crazy, mixed up months that completely changed me. I wonder. Did those seven months change him?

Epilogue
March, 2005

And now I move on. Or so I try. Or do I move back? Back to the me hidden in her shell. Back to the me who never cries, who never feels. I hate to see him. Over a year since I touched him. Over a year since I could feel him breathe. But no less affected. Still lost in the pool he drowned me in, floating face down in the apathy of my own emotionlessness. Still a slave to the savage tenderness he taught me. Still wrapped in the fever-daze.

Brittany Kaye Miller

BETRAYAL

The golden shine of your hair amazes me
Your eyes are wide and deep with misery
I look at your façade and know the truth
What can I do to ease your pain
I have already failed you more than you'll ever know
To be told the reality of the situation you won't hear
Others have been selfish that is true
I don't want to be selfish as they
Circumstances hold me bound to you
As they bind me to him and his face
To erase the past and blank out time
How that would fulfill me to the core
Instead I must look at you and see
You are far too important to lose
I'll shut my eyes and not heed advances
Stay in my place as long as possible
Till I can break free from my prison
Seeing you everyday is my delight
The cure to the poison inside
Near you I won't have want
With that hair of sunshine in my mind
And a chance to see those eyes bright
Misery drained and the color brilliant
As well that smile which will creep gently
Lighting up your face and blessing me
It is a shame that I must feel useless
But I am curing myself slowly
Soon we'll not have hidden discord
This replenishes my soul and makes me hope
That with your hand I'll be forgiven
All sins wipe off my slate
For that is all I can do, hope.

Marco Wright

BACK II ME

What can I do to make you come back?
What must happen for you to realize that…
I love, care, and respect you and since September 2002 those feelings have been true.
What can I do to make you come back?
What will happen to the memories we had?
Will they get put away amongst other failed trials and uncontrollable tribulations?
Or will they be given a chance to prosper and achieve the heights of what we both have to offer?
What can I do to make you come back?
What you were to me I could never forget.
Friend, confidant, girlfriend, woman of my dreams and potential life partner…
I can truly say that you're God's idea of the 9th wonder.
All of that plus the unknown to me…
You opened my eyes, mind, and body to so much you see.
So what can I do to make you come back?
A love as pure as yours, now I'll never find that.

PT Paul

I NEVER SAID

I never said I never loved you.

Would I have let you lie to me
and turn away with that wolfish grin
if I had not wanted to believe in you?

Would I have covered up your faults,
explained your inconsistencies,
(the whole time you were laughing at me)
to save my own self-esteem?

Once, I thought you caught on to me;
thought I saw the light of understanding
flicker in your selfish eyes,
but it was only the spark of another lie
meant to keep me from catching on to you.

Fools we are,
to think that we can trust someone
so like ourselves
to reach beyond their basic need
and find the way to love, somehow.

I never said I never loved you.

I said
I do not love you now.

Lindsey Sherrill

SWEATER

I threw away the sweater.
With no regret I watched
The pink clothe slide into
The bag and out of my life.
A little taste,
That sweater, but poignant.
Poignant as the memory,
Soft as my heart became
That moment
When first I saw him
And the love began.
Now the sweater is gone
Into oblivion as far as I can see
Gone
Just like that love
And my tender heart
No longer soft and pink
But hard.

Annie Laurie Gray

FALSE SERENITY

I hide behind my wall of insecurity,
Men don't get intimately close to me. I throw
the wall up again and again. False serenity.
Fear and distrust allow me no room to grow.

I distrust romance and fear rejection.
My soul searches like everyone else for companionship,
My problem with the one I like is intimidation.
I must remove the layers of my wall or there is no relationship.

Any man I believe wants more than friendship is estranged
from me. If no one gets close I don't get hurt. Loneliness
that what I feel. Alone, frightened and also strange.
This is the only part of my life full of emptiness,

The shy game, that's what I play.
Do you really think any man would stay?

Brittany Kaye Miller

AMBIVALENCE

She took the wrong turn
She left me behind
But she won't find me
When she needs to cry
I left myself open to her lies
I opened up to those evil eyes
I cried myself, I even tried to die
But now I'm wiser to her disguise
Why can't I see me, why do I hide
If I can find a place outside
Out in the sun
Away from my crimes
Nature embraces what I confide
She can't follow
She can't keep up
I've hidden myself neatly
She better give up.

Krissy Marie

BODY-BROCKEN

I am not the healthy child I appear to be.

My chest is too large.
The bones behind it are separating.

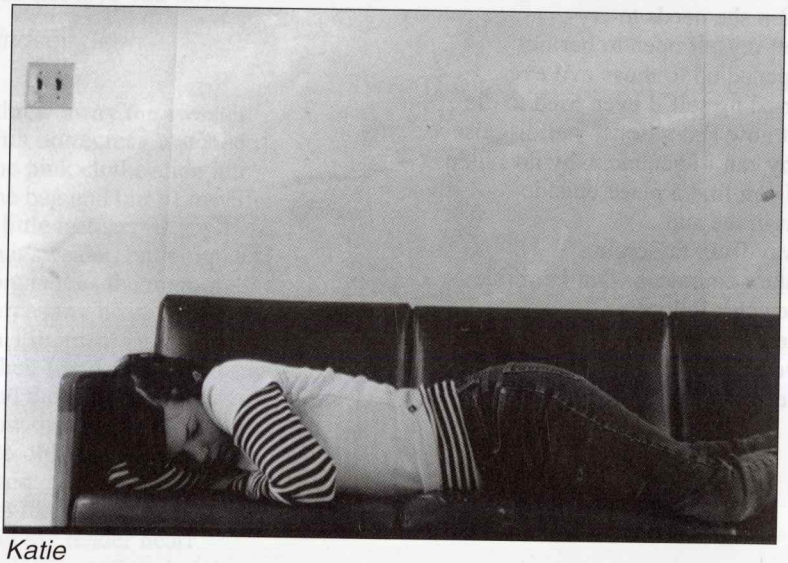
My eyes play tricks.
Fuzz out words, things too close
Go blind from too much light.

My head gives me headaches
Piercing, horrible things that put me out all day.

My legs are not that strong.
The knees have too many problems.
Surgery was supposed to fix one.
I heal slowly. Too slowly.

My lungs do not get enough air.
My brain gives me panic attacks & irrational fears.
The doctor has me on medicine to help.
How can it help, sitting in the drug store?

I am not the healthy child I appear to be.



Katie
Carol Vance

Jennifer Hughes

CHRISTMAS MORNING, 2003

His moist hands that never embraced me
now cling to mine
like the wet shower curtain
grabbing your legs.

I think I'm nauseous.

I think I'm nauseous, but I push
the gas pedal,
become a frantic mosquito.

I dart between potholes and pedestrians;
he spits our directions
and warm blood.

It has bubbles.

The emergency room nurse
glares at his hunched back;
she recognizes self-inflicted wounds.

It's not our policy to support
addictions,
I can't give him painkiller.

Reclaiming his limp hand, I pull my father and his
dripping crimson towel
behind me.

Vivianne Audiss

SHADOW NOTES

The music,
Though I need it,
Kills my soul.
The pain of listening to the notes,
Makes my heart tear,
Makes my tears fall.
Why does what I love,
What I need,
Do this to me?
Silence burns,
But music kills.

Stephen Collins

NIGHT MARES

Nightmares
like dark paint
are slung
between waves of a bad goodbye
and a sky
painted on a cardboard canvas
with birds in the shapes of stretched :"m's"
and clouds that spelt out rain.
Mountains, sharp, like ink
screaming on a seismograph.

So it began with touch,
Soft brush tip—
cardiovascular silk pushed through tarnished veins
to ward us off toward another
chariot with waxed pin wheels
and a forged calling
that you answered
like a wolf in the woods.

A lolling philanthropist
Handing out shards
of a splintered self-portrait
hung on nails driven with madness.

I am nauseous of the ethereal—
abstract ruggedly hewn pieces
that tumble
slow and
silent
like a leaf
violently floating
toward
s a little girl's
outstretched
hands.

Lauren Cleveland

AN ESSENCE

You pluck a petal and watch it fall
It twists and twirls upward
To the sea.
It lands on the surface of the
Clear-blue water and the ripples
Scatter across the clouds

A feather returns from its place
A soft, white feather
Without defect.
The feather dances downward
Toward the pavement.
The hot, dirty pavement
Will corrupt the feather's elegance…

Will you catch it?
Or will you let fate take its course?

A silvery, spherical ring
Falls down from the mist.
It lands in a pool of lavender-white liquid.
Then another
And another
Until hundreds of silvery, spherical rings
Are spiraling down from the mist
Into a gentle pool
Then
They stop.
A small, yellow butterfly
Flutters across the painting

Then the rings return.

A small child toddles out into
A deserted field.
His tiny toes grip at the cool grass
To avoid tipping over
The child's hair stirs as a sweet wind
Smelling of lavender
Skips through the strands of softness.

The child reaches out to pluck a ladybug
From her home on a tulip petal.

In the depths of the tall grass
A serpent dwells.
The poison rushes to its fangs and
He readies himself to strike

You are miles away and cannot help
But will you try?

I look down into my soul
Small white snowflakes flutter
Down into the void.
I am calmed
Though the petals still fall
And time is still alive.

Alex Allen

DRIFTING

Don't use a spoon
eat from your bag of tricks.
Drink the stars,
Stab Earth to her heart.
Listen for the trigger click of the clock,
It says it's three and a half of clubs,
give your heart away.
Reach up for the sun,
It's not there.
That tree's not dead it's just lying down,
Kudzu will take over the world,
A mouse in the road,
run it over.
Elephants aren't afraid of mice
neither am I.
Look a graveyard.
kill some flowers
because the people are dead.
Stand up too fast,
Blackout,
Wake up, spinning with melted hills,
down the drain.
Drunk on stars and dizzy,
stumble over the end of the world.
Remember your manners,
pick it up and put it back.
It's raining on those power lines,
The sky is sick.
The notes are getting longer,
your lullaby coming to an end.
Kill the world,
Turn out the stars,
Cut a hole in the sky,
Burn a book,
Snuggle into your pillow,
pull your sheets around you.
Invite restful dreams into your head,
of things that used to be.
You're going to need your rest,
but not for tomorrow.
Close your eyes,
Sleep,
it's the end of time.

Ashley Earnest

NIGHTMARES

Eyes burning, desperate to remain open.
Fear pummels through the body
Cold sweat breaks out
These vivid dreams, borderline
nightmares, never cease.
Stay awake, must stay awake.
Hope brightens in the mind;
hope that there will
be a dreamless sleep.
Everyone dreams.
Pray that you do not remember;
do not wake up in the
middle of the night
because of it.

Michelle Griffey

TO LIVE

Life happens
And we must endure
The ups and downs
Of the ocean we sail
The waves crash
And we become scared
Then the wind dies
And we feel safe
The good happens
And the bad happens
Our feelings are hurt
But we always mend
The broken pieces
Of fragile hearts
Our mission is to be
A study on living
Why we are here
What we must do
How to conquer
When we will prevail
And where we must go
Our bodies will age
Our eyes will dim
But memories will still be there.

PT Paul

CONSOLARI

(Latin: con-"with" + solari "soothe" =comfort.)

She wipes my grimy tears away,
stray hairs drag raveled threads across my cheek,
splay like plaster to my scalp,
on my forehead—
a dredged field where makeup cakes
in the furrows of my brow.

Now she turns me, presses me to her,
softness on softness, hardness
to hard, only the same height
on plank benches, only the same sitting,
the same in snuffled sobs,
matched and unmatched,
a chorus, a cacophony,
rocking together, locked
in a lost embrace.

Her face is in my hair. I wear
her sobs like my own sweat. Our salt
dries like oceans met. We heave and forget to breathe
and forget to sob. We stare
at each other our own perspectives,
over each other's shoulders,
as if sentinels, as if watching.

Maybe, if we remain this way—
Janus-faced—
death will look for easier prey.

Vivianne Audiss

LIFE AND DEATH

In the night, the dragons flew.
In the day, the death came.
I saw it,
And it conquered me,
My friends saw my death;
And mourned my passing.
Yet they saw me again,
I was whole and I was life.
As death killed me, I overcame it.
As life saved me, I became it.

Jenna Windsor

THANKSGIVING CRY

What do I say to you?
60 years you cried
Today the difference is that very
year
Only a year
that 60 years was lost
one man
one sound
one pain every night
until old age
until 60 years
Took him away.

Leigh Anne Crowson

REQUIEM

The sun dies when the breath leaves your lips
Lost souls cry out in vain to touch
The Fallen Angel
So gracefully she dies, and all the world is still
And the halo turns to dust
As she descends from the clouds
The children weep and gather round
To kiss the gentle mouth once more
To hold her hands and ask her why
And they stand beside the sea
Casting lilies to the vengeful waves
As those vigilant lay her in the earth womb
I weep as Inanna shields her from the light
And she smiles from her satin and soil shroud
The tears are my life, my life was her breath
And now the rain dances in remorse
And the moon keens in agony
Then-out of the twilight-the others arrive
And gather her into their gentle arms
Their lips caress her face and hands
And they return from whence they have come
Now, she is truly gone
And I am truly alone.

For Jason Graves
1986-2003

Cale Hughes

A HEARSE ABANDONED

The Black beast
At the edge of the field
By the road

It waits for me
It taunts me

What is it doing there
So out of place?
Surely it must be mistaken
or perhaps I have

It sits
not running
rusting

It's empty
Abandoned
Dead

Fitting, I'd say
Considering

Jennifer Hughes

DETERMINED

His sleepy eyes gaze at the VCR clock—
It flashes eights.
It's a damn good thing.
He doesn't want to know how long it's been
since she slammed the front door
sent that ugly china plate jumping to the floor
where it shattered
into thirty-seven hateful shards.
Her third dramatic exit this year failed
to grab his attention.

His laughing eyes glance at the door—
it frames her return.
She resets the VCR clock.
He needs to know how long this will take.
She crunches across the shards,
slams the bathroom door,
and turns on the water:
soothing—comfortable—warm.
Her fourth dramatic exit
will not fail.

Bo McGuire

LIBRARY GRANDMOTHER

Library Grandmother in a house of cracks and stacks,
sat perched high on her mildew ridden sofa
watching Alex Trebek and time lag by.

Ivy grew through her windows and bourbon stained her breath.
Cats playfully shredded her curtains,
but she no longer winced at the sounded skin.
She devoted her leisure and two degrees to Book.
(her husband grumbled, and finally left)
while mold and gunk wrestled the dishes in the sink.
She lavished her time only on worn writers who loved and lusted after Book,
And her guests found themselves throned low on a house of fleas,
while she ingested her slim cigarettes
And wished them all away.

*Years later,
The computer and the mice raged war upon her world,
and Library Grandmother and the cats relied on what they knew,
which was a marvelous deal,
but not enough.
The cats died off, one by one by one.
Marching on, she slunk around in silent heels and dated dress,
all the time loneliness cracked the plaster above and beside.

When the fallen queen spent a night in rest,
mildew sprung from the couch,
encasing Book
the cracks
the stacks
then slivered deep into her bedroom and out between her teeth.
The ivy rooted deep and took her neck from behind.
Rot set in.
The roof along with her lungs gave way.
She resigned.
Now Library Grandmother's house sits someone else's.
And Library Grandmother lies in a tidy tomb,
without her blanket of smoke.

Treasure Ingels

RISES FROM ASHES

I remember her smile,
Backlighted like a paper moon.
She was all smiles, in sepia
And monochrome—
Portrayals older than our home
And hair bobbed
Like some 1930s baby doll.

Those photos lay scattered
Once, across the bed,
That was layered in fading
Pinks and reds like a rose garden
That blushes in fall,
Just as the trees shed their greens.

Her smiles gave away nothing.
Smiles across gray, yellowing paper
Reveal nothing but teeth—
Dingy with time. A child lost
In filmy time still grows old.

Somebody must have been proud
Of that bubble of youth,
Tried to capture it a million times,
Each moment contained by a 4 X 4 square.

The twentieth century was dedicated
To the matte finish that blurred the facts,
And showed few tears and every curve on smiling lips.

And now, this new century starts with a blaze
And her smiles burn then crumble to ash.

She floats on the wind now, a smiling phoenix.

Jennifer Hughes

MURDER BY NUMBERS

One uninterrupted sheet of rain
pelts two smiling teddy bears.
Three bouquets of stiff flowers topple
onto the soaked-through purple fur.
Only four people glower
into the gaping, side-by-side-holes.
The mother of the twin five-year-olds sits
in the warm, dry car.
Six officers are positioned around the Crown Victoria
like gargoyles.
The fur is dry seven days later, but the flowers
still lie on their sides.

Vivianne Audiss

A string is pulled,
A puppet moves.
An arm is raised,
A leg kicks high.
The tighter the string,
The higher the leg.
Cut the string,
Release the puppet.
The pain is too much,
The puppet will die.

Vivianne Audiss

I face the doom,
And die slowly.
Only to be pulled back,
By a soul,
I'm not worthy of.

Rachel DiCarlo

A MISTAKE THAT KILLED

In a race
There I ride
I took a turn
And cost a life
With a gash in my head
I ran to the other car
Inside were two men
One I recognized
I pressed my face on the shattered glass
And found my father, whose life just passed
A rush of guilt
Killed my mind
But not as much
As I ended my father's life.

Krissy Marie

"thoughts on my wrist"
in which the poet contemplates her wrist

Blood

three blue pathways
traveling down my wrist
to my heart

Lose some
save a life

Lose too much
lose my own life

Love is blood*
is heart
is thump-thump
thump-thump

It courses
it rages
it glides on through

Veins create a pathway through the body.
Through my body.
Through your body.

I bleed once a month.
If I don't, I panic.

Out, out damn spot.**

Love is blood.
Life is blood.

Blue + air = red.

Out out damn spot.
Love isn't brains.
love is blood.

**"Lover's Walk" Buffy the Vampire Slayer. Episode 8, November 24, 1998.*
***Shakespeare, William. Macbeth.*

Jennifer Hughes

PERSONAL INFERNO

Submerged in my Lake Cocytus,
my flailing arms and grappling fingers
try to break through
the white slap of ice that pushes me down.

Frosty white surrounds me,
numbs me, bites me.
My eyes are sheets of glass
that reflect upward.

My blue lips
silently scream
while I thrash about,
gulp for air.

I wonder if
I truly want
that
breath.

Mary Beth Shepherd

DEATH

You open your eyes
Just to realize it's too late
There are too many lies
You have already determined your Fate

This world is so cold and dark now
Why can't we go back to the way it was
Can't someone show me how
Before I end up back on the floor.

You were supposed to be there
Did she give it all to you?
Life is never gonna be Fair
But you just have no clue.

I am almost to the edge
You pushed me all the way
I am about to step off the ledge
I think today is the day.

Say goodbye for me
I have no time left
Now I can't breathe
And this is what we call DEATH!

PT Paul

HALLELUJAH

"I heard there was a secret chord
*that David played, and it pleased the Lord..."**

It's like that, isn't it, when it's good—it's Biblical and it's righteous—
or it's ass-kicking and ball-breaking,
but it reaches beyond conscious thought
to what is unknown or to what is hoped
or to what is dreamed...

*"...but you don't really care for music, do ya?"**

Oh, I forgot...you don't really get into this poetry shit,
do you?
I know, I know,
"why don't they just say what they mean?"

"It goes like this: the fourth, the fifth,
*the minor fall and the major lift..."**

But, sometimes a poem just hits you, you know...
like an epiphany...or an aneurysm...
words—with their own existence, their own purpose,
burned across the page like...What?
The remote? You're sitting on it...
...asshole...

*"...the baffled king composing 'Hallelujah'"**

Yeah, that's what it's like...it's mystical, like those people in Turkey**
whose eyes roll back in their heads and they speak in tongues
and they spin around and around...
DEADHEADS???
No, you moron, I'm talking about poetry and poets and
poetry and inspiration and the way the words just seem to come,
sometimes....What?

Jeff Buckley...
from the "Grace" CD...
*"Hallelujah"**...

Yeah, I can turn it down...

**"Hallelujah," Jeff Buckley, "Grace"*
Columbia, c. 1994 Sony Music Ent., Inc.
** Dervish (origin of "whirling dervish"): type of religious ecstasy*

Vivianne Audiss

WORDS

I don't know if I'm strong enough for this again
Last time I nearly lost my mind
The words just come
Free flowing and simply there in my mind
I don't ask for them
I don't want them

They say writing is better than drinking
Lose yourself in your words and not drink
Maybe the drink will erase the words
Make them fuzzy and not there anymore
All the great writers drank, maybe that's why
Drinking makes the words go away
I don't want them

Why when things are sunny did they come back
Is stability out of my reach
Last time he was around, he was the cause
Why did they come back
I didn't ask for words
I don't want them

When will they leave again
When will they leave me for good
My fingers move freely
Not guided by my mind
Does my heart guide them
I didn't ask for the words
I didn't want them
I never did

Vivianne Audiss

Untitled 79

I'm writing again
No matter how hard I fight
I always write
I hate to do it
My soul fights the urge
My hand will write
My mind does not think
It's automatic
Words flow
Though I do not ask for them
I fight them

Vivianne Audiss

UNTITLED 19

I cannot appreciate what I do.
All I know is that I do.
I write words.
But where they come from,
I cannot say.
People wish for this,
My curse, my pain,
I wish it for them,
But I cannot and will not give it.

UNTITLED 20

I listen to the words of others,
They tell my soul to write,
They tell my hand to write,
They tell my heart to write.
The echo of their words,
Brings my soul to the surface,
Brings my heart to see,
The truth of my mind.

UNTITLED 22

People see these words.
What do they think?
Am I sane?
Am I really that…
Different?
As I read and reread
I begin to wonder
Of my own sanity.

UNTITLED 59

I reread
What I write
And I question
My meaning
I will continue
Though meaning
Escapes me

UNTITLED 92

I seem to be writing every second
I don't know why
I ignore those around me
I dream my words
Watching them flow onto the paper
Word by word
Not planning any of them
They burst into my mind
Flow through my fingers
Onto the paper

Lauren Cleveland

FINALLY (AN ODE TO ENGLISH 361)

Finally,
A chance to bring myself
Before eyes and ears and mouths
And undress my past and my thoughts
To revel the within
And the deeper within

A chance to bleed my thoughts
Onto the paper, onto the table
Letting them freely flow out of
My pen, my head, my heart
And not be judged in any way
Except constructively

Finally,
A chance to listen and be heard
To speak and be spoken to
As a fellow human being
As a writer
A reader
A thinker

A chance to be comfortable
With who I am and what I write
To put my biggest fears
Onto the paper, onto the table
Before eyes and ears and mouths
That are open and willing to help
That are open and let me grow

Finally, a chance to speak
To say what I couldn't say before
And be comfortable with it
Be comfortable with me

Cale Hughes

PACKAGE

Cut off
Blocked from the world by six cardboard walls
surrounded in darkness
surrounded in mystery
No clues but those of the outside
and inside....
EMOTION

Brittany Kaye Miller

SILVERCHAIR

Dirt has covered your silver chair
Red brown flakes of dusty filth
The weeds have grown and conquered
Clear glass shattered on the ground
Circular stone flying to the floor
The extension of the arm ends
Window broken and breeze way open
Footsteps that rapidly beat
A crime unspoken taken place
A house alone left forgotten
That naughty children have discovered
Rooms empty and bare
Save all but the one with the silver chair

PT Paul

BLACK HOLE

("Black Hole: n. Astronomy; a region of space having a gravitational field so intense that no matter or radiation can escape."
The New Oxford American dictionary, Oxford University Press, 2001)

There is a Black Hole devouring the universe-
sucking down the very fabric of time;
stars in their glimmering,
stars in their dawning,
stars in their green, growing silence
entwined.

Dragged down in this darkness;
whole civilizations,
heads turned in distraction,
dinners cold on the plate,
children hung halfway to the moon
on a swing,
grandmothers on porch steps,
church goers just saved.

This is the way the world will end:
with a bang
and with a whimper....*
for the darkness we fear
is creation inversed,
it is darkness of the soul
with which we are cursed,

And the Black Hole
at the end
of a nickel-plated barrel
is the one
that will devour the universe.

This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper."
"Mistah Kurtz—He Dead."
The Hollow Men, T.S. Elliot (1888-1965)

Stephen Collins

AS LIGHTNING STRIKES THE SAND RIDDEN SKY

the sun tips up the bottle,
lays its glow to rest
on the pillow of a horizon.
Iridescent clouds hang like chandeliers
as wind clasps and the rain falls.

the storm dissects upturned faces;
a child gropes to find his cheeks and lips
amongst a flock of jagged birds.

Men in dark suits stare out
rectangles inside wrecked angles.
The rooftop people with no need to jump
wildly spasm as if they were burning
to death rather than losing
creative places to attach jewelry.

The sound of falling clouds
is a symphony of crystal spoons
that jingles in the city
rustles in the woods
thuds in the desert
and gurgles in the sea.
Sunlight dances across the landscape
as if it were a sequined dress

A cold front freezes the day
and had our planet been injected
with some beverage besides magma
one could see the world now
as a decent frosty mug.

There could be no less pleasant
mosaic.
The gutters are stuffed with shards
and nothing flies but skinny insects
and planes that need new paint jobs.
Tires have never felt
more like balloons
as they pop and render
traffic signals useless. Still
the lights keep changing color
over motionless cars like a woman
undressing in a window
with no one to look.
Broom handlers are hired
by the hundreds: chimney-sweepers

Stephen Collins

street-sweepers and even
a few witches who made pointy hats
with materiel they salvaged
from shredded carriers.
Steel shank leather boots
go into super mass production
because so many cows have died
And bare feet only deepen
the hues of the now dark red streets.

Lauren Cleveland

UNTITLED

As the stars from another planet
Tumble through the atmosphere
Like the tiny parachutes
Of a dandelion,
The earth comes into view.

A swiftly tilting planet*
Rotating
Balancing

It swivels atop the gravitational pull
That is slowly joining the stars
In their plunge.

The air is thin, cold
And far past being able
To sustain the lung of any creature.
All life has long been obsolete.

As we move in closer,
We can see that the world
Did not end in fire,
But for the slow demise
Of a certain element essential for life.

And as the Ring of Endless Light*
Sets its last,
A single, frosty snowflake
Drifts between gravity fields,
Forever lost in the beyond
Of The End.

All around,
Planets collide.
Brilliant, red-orange collages
Of explosion
Send ripples through space,
Warping time.

**references to books by the author Madeline L'Engle*

Frog

THE FIRST DREAM

Across the skies, I take flight
Through the clouds on wings of white
My dragon companion and I soar
Looking for one quest more
Though our journey is unclear and bleak
It's an epic we must seek.

Markune and I fly all alone
Away from family, away from home
So we can defeat the Wyvern Lord
With his might against my sword
The sword of Nelpylo, a glory so ancient
That with it time can be easily bent
But with a cost so deadly and of pain
One may win but die in vain.

We made it to the forbidden chateau
But our courage and bravery did grow
We entered the death-filled hall
And through the darkness I call,
"The being of evil, show your face"
And my heart then picked up pace
For the Lord was there in sight
The source of all blight.

We fought him long and hard
For my love family, and the bard.
In the end we will see
Who would pick up this victory.

With Nelpyle I pierced his throat
At that moment he died and fell
But with a cry, I died as well
Markune alive, but alone without me…

A. Suzanne Flynn

DARK FATHER (NIKANA REKLAWYKS EKUL)

Dark wings spread and then take flight
Gleaming and glowing in the stars of night
A single breath ebbs and flows
Planting fears and growing woes

Light shines and refuses to fade
Growing stronger with move made
Innocence lost, experience gained
With its rise the darkness waned

The two meet in shadowed room
There one faces in his final doom
Face to face, dark knight, white knight
Then darkness faded into light

Krad Edis Tghil

Lindsey Sherrill

THE HERO'S FACADE

As long swept the hours,
Waxing into early night-time-day
And the last deep-shadowed
Monbeam kissed the dew,
Before the stone encased
Window ledge
The man paced back and forward,
Tracing his path in the cold, stern, stone
Of the floor.
His thoughts ran
Quickly
From one to another;
His heart lay cold in his breast.

His hero's heart,
Long fabled
Spoken of in songs
The maidens made
In May
On that bright morning
First of the season,
Was breaking. A hero
They spoke of him,
Called him by name
Great Dragon Slayer,
War Lord,
Idoled, full of fame,
Now crying alone.

How heavy a burden
This honor, this praise!
Yet a cross to bear.
Never allowed to show
Fear or anger
Or Shame.
Over his face a hand
He laid.
The moonlight was fast
Fading,
The day approaching swiftly,
And there was
Armour to wear,
The hero's stiff façade.

For once, he cried, but once,
To admit that some
Answers elude, some dragons
Cannot be slain.
To say but once, To love
Is Strength,
To Hate is Weakness.
And anger but selfish manifestation.
To uncover the head
In its iron veiling
And cry before God and man,
'I am but a man,
Born of a woman
Like all others the same.'

Lindsey Sherrill

The day hastens on.
A bird announces the advent
Of the sun
Rising to wake all,
Poor and rich, King and thane,
Servant girls and
Hero, though he had yet to sleep.
Must he admit?
Why so much pressure?
Is a hero's life too much
For mere mortal-man
To bear?
Yet how does one escape
What life has made his lot?

A bugle blows.
The casements echo the cry
To face the world, both
Sacrosanct and profane,
To listen to the cheers,
Stoic and resolute.
To show no pain,
No love, no passion,
Only to fight, to war, to win.
Only to never surrender,
To never admit defeat,
Though the hero's heart
Never heals
Because he must
Never hurt.

Meredith Hubbard

THE MAN OF MANY NAMES

Young Pelleas of the Isles, fledgling knight
And true devoted son of Camelot,
Lets grandeur and legend and the new day
Make promises which cannot be kept.
He days, he dreams, shiny-eyed and innocent.

Pelleas of the Isles, with adventures
In his head and maidens in his heart, finds
Love in a damsel. He gives his promise
And predicts the future in her slow smile.
He wins, he's won, wide eyed and innocent.

Pelleas of the chains watches Ettarre
Through tearblurred eyes and willingly awaits
Pain for a word from her poisoned apple mouth.
He aches; still he hopes, still dreams though he bleeds.
He quiets, swollen-eyed and insensible.

Meredith Hubbard

Pelleas of the Roundtable believes
In love, trusts in honor, and puts his faith
In a lie, then his sword on two necks,
Betrayed. Sparing life, but renouncing love,
He retreats, hollow-eyed and incensed.

The man of many names—wrath, hate, evil fame—
Who cannot pardon the royal deceit
And cannot suffer the noble failure—
The broken circle ad its pile of splinters—
Leaps into the dark, wild-eyed, broken, lost.

Treasure Ingels

COFFEE IN A STRANGE TOWN

In the coffeehouse,
Smoke rises to the sides
        High above our heads
As lofty as the conversation.
Philosophy spills in dark puddles
That reveal nothing but thirst,
        And leaves that will not grow,
                Will not reproduce,
Rest in residue, on the bottom of a cup.

Their hair is tied back loosely,
        Reminiscent of bohemian
                Mothers or grandmothers now
Grey and settled into the science of life.
Fancying themselves grown,
They whine and unwind
About the state of the union
Or the dis-united, or the reunited
But cannot see their own part.

Philosophy leaves a ring,
        Murky dark but not sinister,
Too empty to menace,
On the napkin to my left.
Steam rises—
Mingles with the smoke,
Where questions become as elemental
As the fire that heats the pot.

We are all Nietszche here, it seems.
The possibilities are endless.
We are without checks nor balances.
Claims are made that could
Never be substantiated in a court or class
But are accepted as truth
As ideas percolate in fetal minds.

In the minds of young Philosophers,
God dies and will not be reborn.
God is dead, Nietszche said,
And his words are eaten like Manna,
Accepted as truth,
Without qualms for souls lost, starving.

Hank Smith

A ROUNDEL

I will make my home of wattle and clay,
Beneath a yurt's nomadic dome,
With hand-hewn logs or straw-baled hay;
I will make my home

On rolling waves and breaker's foam,
Blown by wind and howling spray,
In mountain dens, with those who roam,

Of earth and sod, in trees that sway,
Around my books and garden gnome,
When household goods and good feng shui.
I will make my home.

Lindsey Sherrill

DANS LA COULISSE

When I am there
I am home.
I am totally accepted, loved,
a star for a moment
I am part of a family
And a tradition
A religion
As ancient as the world itself.
Dionysian, Bacchanalian
I am peer with Shakespeare,
Aristophanes, Chekhov, Miller
All united in a kin
Of our art
I am united in an intercourse
Of beauty
Of life
With mankind

Dans la coulisse,
Je suis à la maison

Vivianne Audiss

HOME

There's something there I can't explain
Comfort, care, softness joy
All may be part but there is something
It's not my bed not my home
But something about it makes me safe
The dreams don't haunt me there
The words don't find me
It's safety and comfort
It's not my home

Kris
Carol Vance

Brittany Kaye Miller

SAVE YOURSELF

Why do I take so much time
Can't I breathe without pain
If I do another line
I'll have to pay for another crime
Punishing myself with guilt and chemicals
Waiting for the parole of night that will never come
Good behavior damned for my surroundings
The ultimate goal to be free
Failed by recovery methods too brutal
Surrounded by people of the past
Dragged to the ends from pride
Competitive and searching for acceptance
Superiority in the category not wanted by others
Too proud to be wrong too intoxicated to be right
Taking up so much time causing so much pain
Silently building up the pressure and decisions not meant to be made
I wait forever on the corner
Watching for the cars that go by
Hoping I see one I need
The one to take me home
To gain more time to save myself from another let down
Sitting with my head held low
Weighted down from all the sorrow
My back bent from the heavy chip
Withered and blistered from the heat
Frozen from the cold
I wait for that damn car

Teresa Foster

HOME

We have become sorrowed sparrows,
Flying aimlessly in melancholy,
Searching for a place to call home,
Only to discover our folly;
Home is not a place to flock to,
not foundations or furnishings.

Home is a place that cannot be found
But on the inside of the searcher;
It is a place full of memories,
Crimson and colorful.
This is where home lies,
In the beating center,
Hoping never to be forgotten.

Brittany Kaye Miller

THE ASYLUM

Empty walls painted long ago but seemingly fresh
Hard cold steel covering the windows to the world
Human cages, cells made out of brick and concrete
Long dimly lit hallways with supicious stains on the floor
Echoes that multiply with each step or breath
Papers tossed or left carelessly
Dirt from feet and old age scattered around
Abandoned years ago and left to age
Holding secrets that only whispers can bear
The pain too heavy to travel in screams
Lost souls travel through the building repeatedly
Searching for the cure that was never there
Tormented and alone they sit in their rooms
Waiting for someone to enter the tomb
Reaching out to the world is this place
Sitting so proudly on the hill over the town
A building so evil it would not burn down.

Kelly Austin Kilpatrick

MEMORIES OF COUNTISBURY

The invaders lay strewn about over the dew covered grass of the Exmore countryside. Their ships bobbed over the waves idly in the harbor of Lynmouth, south of the fortress. The beasts on the bows of the ships silently called out to their fallen fathers to revive them, release their sails and let them freely roam the seas; but alas, the Danish ships in the Bristol Channel would never again sail under the authority of their heathen masters.

"Ealdred," a voice called to me from the bottom of the stairwell of the tower. I turned my attention from the ships in the harbor and the revolting scene that lay before me to the soldier. I somberly walked down the cold stone steps of the tower to where the man awaited me.

"Ealdred, we have counted the death toll. Eight hundred and forty Danes were killed yesterday, with only five hundred English casualties. We believe there were a few Norsemen within the lot, but the vast majority were Danes," the soldier informed me. He appeared as if he had successfully fought the battle yesterday with few scars to show; he was lucky that he was a good soldier, for only those would survive battles between the invaders.

After the soldier had given me the news, I at once set out to do my duties. I was a messenger between our King, Alfred the Great of Wessex, and my Thegn, Odda of Devon. A young page passed by me on his way to serve his master, who was probably a general or a thegn. "Boy," I called out to him. He turned around tentatively, his bright, childish eyes filled with nightmarish memories of yesterday. "Go secure a boat for me in the harbor. There will be a Welsh man there who answers to the name of Trystan. Tell him I am ready to leave. Inform your master that you ran an errand for the messenger of Alfred, he will forgive you for not immediately attending to your duties," I commanded and reassured the boy, who turned and ran out of the fortress and towards the harbor. I followed shortly after.

I walked through the heavy oak doors that barred the fortress, and immediately found myself submerged in a puddle of dark crimson blood and muck; muck from yesterday. Memories of the battle immediately penetrated my thoughts.

I vividly remembered watching the omnipresent Danish ships from the towers of Countisbury. They had been in the harbor for nearly five nights, causing a constant anticipation and dread of their movement into the countryside. Almost all of the people living in the area flooded the fortress of Countisbury seeking protection from the old stone walls.

There would be no Easter celebration at Countisbury in the year of our Lord 878. The Danes that waited greedily in the harbor had planned to besiege the Exmore lands and waterways, stopping the local fishing, and devastating the food supply of the locals. However, that was not their only plan. Guthrum, the Danish king, who resided at Chippenham with his armies for the winter, had seen them to ravish the Devonshire areas. Once they were secured, then Guthrum and his forces could proceed to invade southern England, and move the boundaries of the Danelaw further south. If the battle fought yesterday had taken a different turn, Guthrum may have had the chance to take southern England and Wessex. The coming of the Danes and Norsemen spelled an end to the young English nation. I walked further through the seas of lifeless men.

Memories that I could never forget occupied my thought as I moved onward towards the harbor. I remembered the fear that ran through Odda's soldiers as we formed our defensive lines in the fortress when the army of marching Danes could be seen coming form the harbor. I remember the deep thudding my

heart made, when my Thegn gave the commands to initiate. The archers in the towers fitted their arrows into place on their bows, as young boys lit the oiled cloth covered tips with torches; the smell of the fires were putrid. I remembered the soldier standing next to me saying, "at least we will not die of starvation." He died before my eyes on that horrid day.

I nearly tripped over a Danish soldier's sword as my mind refocused in the present. I curiously knelt over and picked up the weapon and palmed over the intricately carved hilt. I couldn't help reminisce on the day before, when nearly eight hundred double-handed swords, short-swords, and Danish axes were raised in conquest against the English in the fortress. I had been struck on the shoulder by a sword similar to the one I held in my hands. I thanked God that I would survive the wound I received. Now, all the swords and weapons that sought to eradicate lay lifeless next to their owners on the fresh green English grass. I put the weapon back beside the body to which it had once belonged. I had no need to pillage their possessions; the armies and local peasants were already hard at work over the gory task.

I stepped over the bodies and onto the dirt path that lead to the harbor where my boat awaited me. I saw the little page that I had sent running back to the fortress. I knew that he had finished his job and hurried back so as not to be reprimanded by his master.

As I walked the path, I accidentally stepped on a newly budded rhododendron. They usually grew further east, but during this time of war it was pleasant to see such beautiful flowers growing over such a terrible scene. My mind still wandered back to yesterday. I could feel the pain the rhododendrons felt as the Danish armies trampled over them and onward to Countisbury.

Next to the rhododendron lay a charred and broken arrow shaft. Yesterday, so it seemed, that not even the fires of the Englishmen could hinder the foe. They pressed onward, unscathed by our fiery torrent of arrows. I walked on.

I saw a local family come onto the battleground scene to pillage what they could from the dead, even the ill-fated Englishmen that lay cold on the ground. Battlegrounds were always a sore sight; I had seen far too many as had every other able-bodied Englishman since the beginning of the invasions.

"Ealdred," the soldier who had told me the death toll called out to me from a distance. I turned my gaze to the man as he ran to catch me; I would not turn around and walk through the battlefield if I did not have to. "Our Thegn Odda wishes that I tell you more good tiding to tell our King. Notify Alfred that among the dead are Sigord, brother of Ivar and Halfdan Ragnarsson," the man said, panting and out of breath. In the distance I could see the thegns examining the body of the Danish leader. "I will tell our King," I said solemnly, and walked on.

Priests were diligently blessing those on the fields that still breathed but wouldn't live to see another nightfall. Local farmers and fishermen had been gathered with the peasant seeking refuge at Countisbury to quickly bury the dead in mass graves. The English soldiers were buried first.

Ahead of me lay the channel and the small fishing vessel that awaited me. The seas was calling me, gently, sweetly surging with each wave that tossed the ships about. I was anxious to be on the sea, away from the fallen Danes, and away from my memories of Countisbury. Trystan waited for me in the boat that was secured to the shore by a weathered rope and a barnacle covered wooden stake. I unfastened the rope hat held the boat ashore, and waded through the icy waves and into the boat. Close by, the heathen ships writhed in anguish as the English soldiers hurriedly took off all the supplies from them. A mast had begun

to rise from the gray waters, covering all that floated on the sea in a cool veil. The English soldiers took the mist as an omen that the spirits of the slain Danes wee coming for revenge. It was a common and rational fear amongst the English when they actually defeated the invaders, which was not very often.

My Welsh guide, unafraid of the mist, released the small sail of the boat as we began to drift further from land. Trystan greeted me in his native tongue, which I could not comprehend. My mind was not on the man guiding the boat, but still continuously drifting back to the day before at Countisbury.

I began to think of how many men fell before the cool blade of my sword; moaning in pain and calling for their mothers and loved ones in Valhalla. "Let it go, Ealdred," the Welsh man said with a heavy accent. Apparently my grim appearance and dirty stains from the battle told my guide all that I had seen. "Are you all right?" Trystan asked, referring to my shoulder, which had already been bandaged. "I believe I will survive," I replied.

The sky was gray, as was the sea. The somber waters gently rocked the boat as we made our way to the river that would lead us to Athelney and Alfred. The Somerset marshes seemed so far away. The mist grew so heavy over the water that it was possible to breathe in the vapors; the mist cleansed me, in a spiritual sense.

"Are you a God-fearing man, Ealdred?" Trystan asked me through the fog. "Aye, isn't any man who has see the dragon ships sailing into the harbors," I replied, my mind slowly forgetting and concentrating on the mist. "May I pray aloud for your survival of the battle, a safe journey for the both of us, and for the sake of those depending on your message?" Trystan asked as he turned the vessel into the wind. "Please," I asked. At that moment in the tiny fishing vessel, out on the misty seas, and stained crimson from the day before…I knew that only through faith could the English defeat the heathens, and only through faith could I let go of the memories of Countisbury.

"World-ruler, in Thy heavenly realm above,
Oh Lord our God, shine down Your love.
Be with your children on the seas,
and oh Lord, I pray that You our God,
will remember Countisbury.
Amen."

Historical Background

The Battle of Countisbury Hill was fought during the Easter season in the year 878 A.D. It was a minor battle between the English and Danes, but of great significance. The marauding Danes had sailed from South Wales with twenty-three ships, and into the Lynmouth harbor where they waited to besiege the Countisbury lands. Danish ships could hold roughly thirty-six fighting men, and statistically that would mean that almost every Danish man that fought at Countisbury perished. The Danish leader who lost the battle at Countisbury is an unknown brother of Ivar and Halfdan, who were prominent figures during the time.

Prior to the battle of Countisbury Hill, the Danes had conquered most of eastern and middle England. Those who lived outside the Danish boundaries, which would become known as Danelaw, were often subject to raids and invasions. In the mid-winter of 878, Guthrum, King of the Danes, succeeded in moving his armies to Chippenham (successfully moving an army in winter was a feat considered by most at the time to be impossible). Through this invasion they gained

control over many West Saxon peoples, which forced Alfred the Great, King of Wessex (871-October 26, 899), and his armies to move west of Selwood in Wessex, and later to Athelney in the Somerset marshes.

After the victory at Countisbury Hill, the English, under the leadership of Alfred, lead successful raiding parties against the Danes, building the morale of the English people. It would take many more battles between the English and the Danes before compromises could eventually be made; and alas, all conflicts ceased when a larger nemesis shadowed over England with eyes of conquest, which would be remembered as the Norman invasion of 1066.

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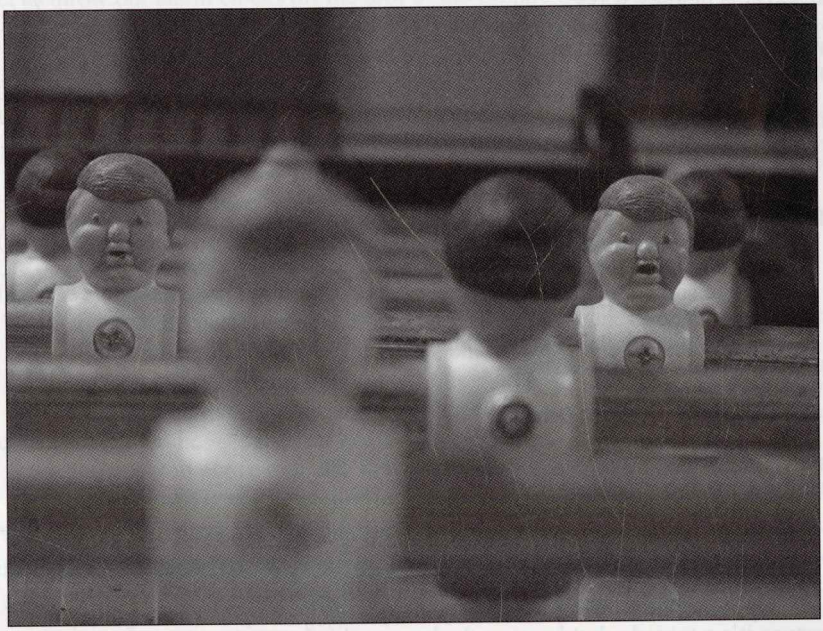


Opponents
Patricia Lovelady

Stephen Collins

GOSSAMER GLOBE

the streets seem to relax
when you walk them down.
steam lifts from rusted sewer tops;
shuffles, scrapes, swinging doors
round and round in a sleepy head
roll. cobble bumps—
the acne of the city. pressure washes are lies,
nothing this dirty could be this clean…
liness is next to ugliness.
they say the cash crop is cotton
but fields of neglect sprout up everywhere.
descendants of bleakness, we cultivate it
small black seeds
you can squeeze under your fingernail.
rat feces
used as fertilizer purchased with grants
given to see this stuff grow.
a kudzu experiment
out of control.
Can't kill it fast enough,
This stuff is immune
To screams in alley ways
And heart attacks in the diary section.
drugstore on seventh and main.
drains on the way drawn
with urine colored sidewalk chalk
chasing after rain bought
wholesale from wavy haired widows.
It's a better sign for the ships at sea…
ing all at once the meaning
of letting fog roll in.
mist here doesn't roll,
it bounces and does cartwheels
like someone blew a kiss
and the girl down the street forgot
to catch it. So lonely intention
turns a head to every passerby.
a man harvesting neglect
using old hands, lifelines so vague
a hard rain could smear 'em flat
catches it, instead a cup of coffee—
just the same it burns him.

*

It is all trash, people call them houses, buildings, trailers, whatever. The fact remains that if you tore it all down it would be ruble, waste. Structure wriggles its way in, so we accept living in organized piles of garbage. I saw it once, the day these days would turn down a one way. People all look up as sirens go off; not because it's a tornado, but because the boys at the fire station think the world is ending. They are not alone. Shadows hide sway because art classes have not learned to shade underneath bushes, people, or chipped stone. It is all too D, too surreal. I half expect the blaring sirens to harmonize with arch angel trumpeters. But right before I give up all hope I look up gossamer in the dictionary and find the most poetic definition I've ever seen. So instead, a kid sticks to his Slip and Slide; a man on his way to the funeral dodges a sprinkler; and the girl looks up just in time to watch invisible lips float through traffic.

PT Paul

POSTCARD FROM AMERICA TO ALLEN GINSBERG (RETURNED, FORWARDING ORDER EXPIRED)

Riding on the back of the WPA, Woody Guthrie gave the country away;
this land is your land, Allen Ginsberg, this land is my land,
from the negro streets at dawn to Paradise Alley,
in the roaring winter dusks of Brooklyn to Bellvue,
to nowhere Zen New Jersey,
this land was made for you and me.
From the squalid reservations of the Native Americans
to the white-bread suburbs of the factory workers,
to the flophouses of the uncouth unemployable,
to the death-houses of the aged unwanted,
to the mansions of the children of the Founding Fathers of Capitalism,
this land was made for you and me.
Oh, say can you see amending the constitution just to define marriage
as the union of a man and a woman
so that gay couples cannot enjoy the same rights as straight Americans?
This land is your land, Allen.
Let us throw our alarm clocks off the roof of the Empire State Building
and declare this nation "The Land That Time Forgot."
Time and a half, overtime, double-time, time is now owned—
it is now Time-Warner. Time is for sale. So is Truth. It has been sold.
Only in America can the government pay a journalist
almost a quarter of a million dollars to write bogus "news stories"
glorifying the "No Child Left Behind" education campaign
when, at the same time, school budget cuts keep teachers in poverty.
Wonder how many textbooks you could buy with that money?
How many school lunches? How many desks? How much paper?
This land is my land and I was attacked, Allen, me and my
Sacred Mother America attacked and our buildings destroyed.
Some of our Americans died, Allen, unknowing, innocent and blameless,
in a war that foreigners brought to our shores.
We are not loved in this world, Allen, we are not loved.
Let us take our clothes off and run in the street, Allen—
no one will notice—or else they will make a reality TV show about it
and we will have been made insincere.
Do they have TV where you are, Allen?
They must, for it is God. It is God, Allen, and we are America—
you and me—our strophes just part of the white noise of protest
that America tunes through to find "The Truth",
brought to you by CNN or TNN or TNT or CBS or
IBMNOSAYCANYOUSEEEE by the dawn's early light over the Brooklyn Bridge
that you are not alone in the total animal soup of time, Allen Ginsberg,
you are not alone—I am with you, Allen—America is with you.

(Response to "America" by Allen Ginsberg-words and phrases adopted from original not indicated, but annotated here.)

Alex Allen

STAR TEARS

The stars quiver in the sky,
Inwardly they cry,
Remembering a world untouched,
A night truly dark.
They mourn for a land untouched,
A night truly dark.
They mourn for a land undone,
To create an unnatural light,
In which to bask a face,
Marred by man's imagination and creativity.
His attempts to make the world a better place; failure.
Problems arise and are solved by more problems.
Were there problems before man
confused better with easier?
Tears fall from the stars,
For a place, in which,
Man lives with nature instead of apart,
In which problems find solutions,
A place harder to live in but truly the better,
A place forgotten by man,
but remembered by the stars.

Teresa Foster

FALLEN ANGEL

your little girl dreams are gone,
let them go.
you must age now,
let them go.
your angelic purity has changed.
it has faded into what you are.
your morality questionable
what are you?
are you flesh?
does your heart ache?
do you long for the answer
to caress your lips,
calm your heart?

something out there is hurting you.

as prey, you are as helpless as an angel
fallen from the sky,
feeling alone and weak.

little do you know,
you can Fly.

Alex Allen

UNDER OVERCAST SKIES

I didn't go.
I didn't make the trip, to that place that smells of certain old people's houses and antiseptic and antibacterial sprays and over cleanliness.
I didn't go to the hospital.
I didn't visit him while he was there.
I didn't go to stare at him, while he was there, hooked to wires and tubes, on those pristine white sheets.
I didn't see his mangled leg or bandaged face or the look of pain, that I know was there because of his smashed dreams, that you could only see if you managed to look past his spaced out countenance.
And I didn't visit him either.
I didn't go see him lying comatose there on that hospital bed and I didn't see the machines that Were keeping him alive.
I didn't cry when they wheeled him in while we sang our senior farewell song and I didn't choke up at graduation when they wheeled his body, dressed in cap and gown like a doll, across the stage in front of me to give him an honorary diploma which they had to lay in his lap.
I could have gone to the hospital.
I had the chance to go, but I didn't go see either of them.
I could have cried with everyone else while we sang and I could have choked up at graduation, no one would have known, my speech was over.
But I didn't go and stare, I didn't cry, and I didn't choke up.
I don't feel bad about any of it.
You're probably thinking,

You're cold,
You're cold-hearted,
You're heartless.

I'm sure I am to you, I am whatever you think I am, what you think is your opinion.
Maybe I don't regret not seeing them, maybe I do, but I don't feel bad about it.
They were my friends.
You're probably thinking,

You're an awful friends,
Take the "r" out and it would fit you better,

But listen.
I was there to make him laugh,
I was there to laugh with him.
I was there running beside him before the accident.
I was there to encourage him during basketball practices and I was there to accept his encouragement as well.
I was there running beside him after the accident when he still had the metal bar in his femur.
I was there to admire his strength, determination, and will power.
I was there when the coach told him he couldn't run anymore.
I was there to watch him keep running after everyone else was tired, even after the coach told him to quit.
And I was there to make him laugh too.
I was there when he was his least popular.
I was there for him when his friends consisted of me and two others.

Alex Allen

I was there for him when his brother was paralyzed in that car accident and I was there for him When he had his other car accidents.

I was there for him when we were considered outcasts.

I was there to help build him up and I was there to watch him become popular.

I was there for both of them any time they needed me; I didn't go see them in the hospital. They didn't need me then. It was their weakest, physically, they didn't need me they needed doctors and I didn't want to see them like that. I want to be able to think back about them and remember how they were, not how they looked that one time on that hospital bed.

I didn't know why it had to happen to them.

I remember one of my teachers asking my class "who is gonna have to die before you learn your lessons?"

The lesson she was talking about was not to speed and to be careful when driving.

Looking back on it I think you can glean a more important lesson: "Life is too short and unpredictable to be taken for granted."

Nobody had to die, that first continues to live his shattered dreams of becoming an NBA star, and the second is far worse off. He now exists mostly in the memories of others because he never fully came out of his coma.

I'm sorry Lance and Jeremiah if you're upset that I didn't see you then.

Lance, continue on through life, I know you'll make it, you were always smarter than me and now I know you have a lot more determination, will power, and strength than I do and who knows, if you keep it up you'll probably make it into the NBA. That is if you still want to, but whatever you decide to do you can do it.

Jeremiah, maybe one day you'll be able to read this but until then I'll hold to my memories of you and you'll continue in our hopes that one day you will wake up.

Leigh Anne Crowson

WINTER GIRL

What is this child, pale and still
Upon the windowsill?
Cradled by ice and fever, she
Eyes the sky in slumber
Blanketed by sheets of frost
Cold fingers entwined with iced lilies
Dreamless in her wake.
Singing lips stilled by webs of ice
Silver banshee kissed by snow
Frozen ringlets, icicle lashes
Bound in Angels' robes of cold
All is silent, all is dead
And slowly the scene burns away
The faltered innocence, the Angel's demise
There is nothing else
But the song of my tears
Striking the glass
In the darkness
Of my sanity.

PT Paul

NIGHT ON FISHING CREEK

God is drumming His fingers
on the roof.

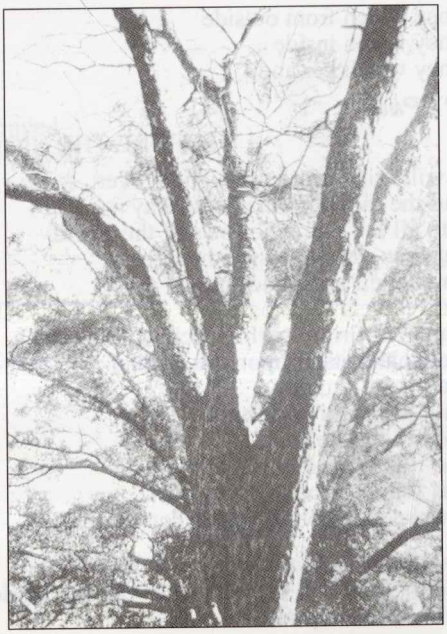
Ever the gentleman,
He cracks his knuckles
to ask if we are awake.

Well, yes, but we were only going to the window
to watch the ancient oaks
play tic-tact-toe on the neon glass.

Suspended in our cedar cocoon
we haunt the edges of our dreams.
This waterfall of night
is arterial in our drowsy ears
and we wonder why we woke
when God is playing such a lovely lullaby.

We are asleep as if we never left the pillow,
spooned with phantoms
on musty sheets of Autumn's scent.

Remembering,
forgetting,
dreaming,
wondering;
will the river rise tonight above its banks?



Tree
Chris Sandlin

Anne Atwood

RAIN

It's raining outside
I watch from inside
Raindrops that fall from the gray sky
Onto the shimmering green leaves
Form the trees down onto the grass
Trickling down flower stems
Soaking the ground

I watch from inside
Raindrops pattering onto the pavement
Cooling drops rinsing away the heat of the sun
Cleansing drops washing away all the dirt
Make everything fresh again
Make everything new again

It's raining inside
I watch from outside
Tears fall from my gray eyes
Onto my shimmering cheeks
From my face down my neck
Trickling down my chest
Soaking into my shirt

I watch from outside
Tears pattering the carpet
Cooling drops washing away the pain
Cleansing drops washing away the shame
Make everything fresh again
Make everything fresh again

They watch from outside
They watch inside
They watch her and I

PT Paul

BEFORE THE NIGHT IS OVER

It will rain before the night is over
and the rain will nuzzle its way
into all the secret hollows of the world-
between the fingers of the trees,
down their arms and trunks,
until it wets the mosses
snuggled firmly within each woody crotch
that splays itself upon the ground-
then it will go down
until it can go no further,
until roots sup on it
and it is sucked into the fine hairs
that fur each toe of every root
and the question of rain becomes moot.

It will rain before the night is over
and the rain will have its way with the world
as lovers always do.

PT Paul

OF CLAY

He scooped the clay from the riverbank,
roseate, ambered, cool like the sunrise,
silken soil coiled serpentine across his palms—
he cradled it, coaxed it, caressed it,
kneaded it with thoughtful fingers,
considered it this way and that,
held it up to the light,
placed it down upon the wheel
and turned it.
Now rose like a lover roused
from wanton slumber, clumsily
but with a grace of form
born of selflessness.
He cradled it within his cupped fingers,
guiding it upward as it spun-
he coaxed it inward, outward, upward;
upward in the classic form.
As hours glassed in frosted panes
passed in shimmered glances
he breathed on it, his brown back bowed.
He breathed on it, his fingers posed
upon a pout, a lip of clay his fingers
tipped this way and that.
He breathed one last, then held his breath
and dipped his thumb so carefully
into the spining effigy,
so carefully slid his thumb
into the growing pout,
but, then he breathed—his hand betrayed—
his fingers meshed where grace had played—
and, it was, once again, just a lump of clay
he found beside the river.

Brittany Kaye Miller

THE COURTYARD

Walking through the deserted courtyard
Leaves rustle beneath my feet
The path is long and narrow
The journey short and lonely
My arms swing gently and freely
My feet move forward and quickly
The air is crisp in the fall
When I decide to leave.

PT Paul

SOMETHING ABOUT THE HEAT

Summer mumbles something about the heat,
sweat falling from her brow.
How is a season supposed to reason
with the heat cooking up such potent stuff
as asphalt after-fragrance dancing on oil slick fumes
in afternoon olfactory assault on clear blue-eyed summer skies?
It's enough to make any season cry.

Summer mumbles something about the heat
and beats city sky scraper dust from her sheets.
Cracking linen whips, she ripples stale slip streams,
ripping off the top sheet, fitted sheet, mattress cover—
Hell, throw the whole thing over.
Dump dirty laundry and disintegrating moisture pillows,
then billows the sky with fine new percale.
Snap hospital corners of fresh atmosphere—
clear, cool linens to begin again
the bedding of July.

Summer mumbles something about the heat,
flinging undergarments in a heap—
sweat soaked cottons dumped in the drink,
swirled in agitated circles of tropical complaint,
pumped up and down and all around against islands awash,
flung at last upon the shore of some larger land mass
to drip dry—thermals weave fresh air dainties heavenward;
the latest fashions to die for!

Summer mumbles something about the heat
in fits of sleep that shift constellations in their climb.
Her prime long past, she tosses in dreams of a star-crossed lover
whose she will discover in due time.
His sign diametrically opposed, she must suppose
their meeting would quench her fire,
but the fear she lacks will be her undoing and her fall—
for, as she should know, opposites always attract.

PT Paul

THE WALL

The wall resisted, of course,
because that is what walls do
to the wind that sovereigned
its way through the world
and to the sun that boasted
its eminence, too,
even to the rain that reigned
the vertical plane
that the wall claimed tenement to,
but in the end it could only pretend
to hold the ivy at bay
when in its brick heart it knew
they shared a kinship of clay.

Alex Allen

REFLECTIONS

I lay back starring at a street lamp surrounded by an expanse of sky so blue it's almost black.
I watch the light from the lamp explode into a starburst through my eyelashes as my eyelids drift shut.
The sky is so dark that the tops of the trees blend into it and it all becomes one big empty space.
The power poles and light blend with the trees in the dark, the power poles pretending to be as they once were and the light lines going unnoticed.
A lamp stand in the clearing between the trees seems strange and dreamlike with its white globes and striking misplacement.
Everything is colorless save the sky, bare of stars, and the glowing lights.
Daylight proves there is color.
The trees are red, orange, and yellow, with some still green and others that are completely bare.
Leaves fall from the trees blown by the same wind that dishevels my hair.
The power poles and light lines are obvious now; they contrast sharply against their backdrop of trees.
They are all straight lines and angles formed by the poles and support wires that hold them steady in the ground.
Nature is not all straight line and angles; it makes its own shapes and sets its own course.
Nature is untamed and wild, and doesn't worry with appearances.
As beautiful as the street lamp starburst and misplaced lamp stand were, a clear night's sky best both.
I live with both the manmade and nature, to which I prefer the latter.
I love ever-changing nature and when the wind through my hair I don't bother fixing it.

Hank Smith

A RONDEL

The moon, too, knows what it's like
To travel through the night,
On roadways gleaming blue
With phosphorescent dew
Of morning in repose;
The moon, too, knows

What the stars and clouds just might
And the birds in earthly flight
Reckon to be true—
Ah, if they only knew
What the sun may just suppose.
The moon, too, knows.

Lauren Cleveland

NATURE REVEALED

She sheds her sheer cloak of emerals
In exchange for one of burning amber.
Bares her delicate limbs,
Releasing colors of fire.

The days are warm and windy;
The nights tell of future frost.
And in the months that are nearing,
All her beauty will be lost.

Winter will chill her bones.
There will be no fruit to bear.
No children playing in her branches,
White snow becomes her hair.

She'll find her final days will leave her
Forgotten and alone.
Soon she'll have a lovely resting bed
Below her crown of Stone.

But the seeds she's left behind will grow
Into a sight to stun.
Enchanting in their own season,
Nourished by the same Son.

Michelle Griffey

I SAW THE MOSS GROW

I saw the moss grow
the tiny tendrils stretching
their miniscule arms
towards the sun
Reaching for the rays of life
That filter through the canopy
of overhead green.
The tree that mothers moss
Stands elegantly in her place
Stretching her high arms
In a gesture of worship
To the sun that is her god.
She dances with her brother wind
Moving with grace and beauty
She sways and bows
to the notes of water dropping
on her veil of leaves
She protects the baby moss
from fear of drowning
But allows the shaggy green
To weave itself a carpet
Of rarest design
To warm the splendid toes
Of mother tree.

PT Paul

PASSAGE

The delta shifts her hips
and the river licks a new passage,
assuaging his hunger
with her sugar white sands
and loamy sediments.

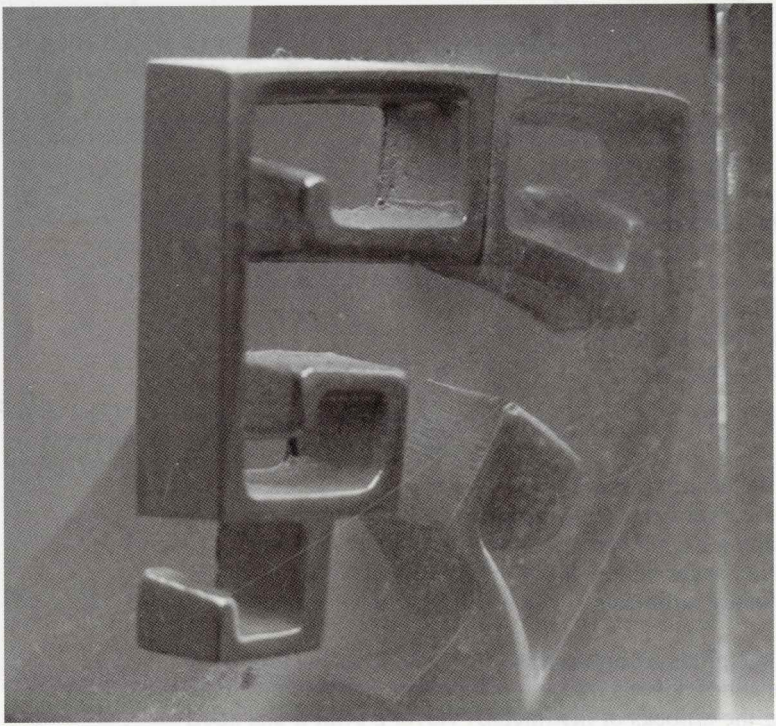
The sun glints on his promise
as he slides, lover-slow,
along the hillocks of her thighs,
drying like tears in the crevasses
of her bent knees.

Spent, she slacks her toes
and feels him flow languid
from her touch,
but this much she knows—
in the brown marrow of his heart
he carries her with him
to the sea.

Vivianne Audiss

UNTITLED 67

Some words are published
Some songs are sung
But those that aren't
Are the ones that
Bare the soul
The ones that are laughed at
The ones passed over



Self Perception
Patricia Lovelady

University of Montevallo

The Tower

2005